



THOMAS CARLYLE

*From a photograph by Elliott & Fry*

# ESSAYS

BY

THOMAS CARLYLE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

FREDERIC HARRISON

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## INTRODUCTION

might<sup>o</sup> have been written by the author of *Vanity Fair*. The allusions, witticisms, and nicknames are by no means cryptic. The tone is genial; the poetry is latent; the learning kept well in hand.

It must strike every reader of these essays how many phrases, topical allusions, anecdotes, and quotations, now in current use with us in journals, in magazines, and even in conversation, were first minted by Carlyle. Every second phrase of Milton's *Lyrics* has passed into common speech. And I have been told that a very old lady, who through life had abstained on principle from seeing, or even reading, a *play*, when at last taken to witness a performance of *Hamlet*, expressed wonder that the author should have adopted so many proverbs and common sayings. I can fancy such a reader wondering that Carlyle should have borrowed so many current "chestnuts". In these four Essays there are no politics, no polemics, not a single revolutionary diatribe, no threat of social cataclysm. No reader will find his principles offended, be he Tory or Democrat, evangelist or free-thinker. In these few pages, at any rate, he will find himself in sympathetic communion with the chief prose thinker of the many-sided Victorian era of our literature.



## INTRODUCTION

The first Essay here reprinted is that on Goethe, of 1828, or rather one of the five or six studies which Carlyle devoted to his great German master. It was an attempt, he tells us, "to make some survey of his writings and character in general". Goethe was ever, I suppose, Carlyle's chief literary hero—the most complete incarnation of Carlyle's ideals, the foreign master whom he did the most to make us Englishmen understand. He is never weary of telling us of the supreme genius of Goethe, of all that Goethe did for Germany, for modern thought, for truth in art, in philosophy, in life. And it adds much to the interest which these eulogies produce in us, that Carlyle was so singularly unlike Goethe in temperament, in method, in achievement, in purpose; that in some things Carlyle's estimate of Goethe would be rejected by Goethe's own disciples abroad, and in many things would be doubted by some of us at home.

His is no criticism of Goethe's works. It is a summons to us to understand the man. It is a portrait of Goethe's character, a psychological anatomy of his mind. It is a life-like sketch of the living genius, not a critical analysis of his poems. It is characteristic of Carlyle that he deals with Goethe's prose far more than with his verse:—with *Dichtung und*

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*Wahrheit* and *Wilhelm Meister* rather than with *Faust*, *Egmont*, and *Tasso*. These, indeed, are hardly mentioned in this Essay. To many persons here and abroad Goethe spells *Faust* and little else. Now Carlyle, who had scant love of mere poetic form, is absorbed in the moral and spiritual thoughts in poetry, rather than in its grace and charm. Accordingly, what Carlyle set himself to do was, not to praise Goethe's verse, as to the beauties of which mankind are agreed, but to deliver to us something of the moral and spiritual message of the prophet Goethe—one of the Major Prophets (he thinks) of these latter days.

The Essay on Burns is of the same year, 1828—Carlyle's own thirty-fourth year, in his Craigenputtock days. It is assuredly one of his brightest, heartiest, finest pieces. He was then of the same age as Burns at his best; like Burns, living in a Lowland Scotch retreat, very poor, conscious of genius, indignant at neglect, and burning with great thoughts. By birth, by circumstances, by creed, by sympathies—by everything but poetic genius—Carlyle was the very man to do justice to Burns, to love him, to make us love him, to enter into the poet's soul, to pity his follies, to judge his vices, with such pity and such judgment as the Recording Angel will show

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when he enters the sentence passed in Heaven on a noble, erring, misunderstood man of genius to whom after a hundred years full justice has been done. Carlyle has rarely left us a passage more beautiful and more true than the opening paragraph of the Essay on Burns. It contains this aphorism: "The inventor of the spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary". Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, are there to testify to this—as are St. Paul, Socrates, Comte. One must live as long as Kant, Goethe, and Carlyle to be fully recognized in life.

The Essay on *Boswell's Johnson* is also of the Craigenputtock time, one of Carlyle's most enthusiastic tributes to one of his typical heroes. There are curious analogies between the circumstances and lives of Johnson and Carlyle, amid broad contrasts of temperament and intellect. Johnson was a mass of prose, of common sense, of logic, of orthodox conventions, and social tastes. Carlyle was a mystic, a seer, a revolutionist, a hermit, almost a cynic. Yet the two men met on the field of courage, independence, sincerity, hatred of humbug, and scorn of meanness. And both, after a life of toil and neglect, lived to domi-

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nate in<sup>o</sup> the literature of their time. He who wishes to test the humane insight of Carlyle into natures with which he had little fellowship should read his estimate of Boswell along with the metallic epigrams of Macaulay on the prince of biographers.

The Essay on *Sir Walter Scott* is more critical, less generous than the other estimates, in many ways to me, at least, disappointing, in some ways almost unjust. Yet it is included here as being eminently typical of Carlyle, revealing Carlyle's nature better than Scott's, curiously characteristic of Carlyle's gospel. He was no poet; as we saw, he judged poems not so much for their poetry as for their ethics. He had exalted ideas of the literary mission: he had profound scorn of literary trifling and literary trading. Now Scott was in all essentials a poet, a creator of living beings, one of the great poets of the world, one to be counted along with Shakespeare, Molière, Cervantes, and Fielding. On the other hand, be it said with sorrow, he had not that heroic independence of soul which marked Burns, Johnson, Carlyle himself. And the decline of this splendid genius, of this loveable mass of manhood, into a sordid game and a trumpery ambition, this is one of the sorrows of poor humanity. In a book, however little, which

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pretends to give us a specimen of Carlyle, we must include some fragment even of his sterner moods.

The salient fact about these four chosen Essays of the master is one that is stamped on all Carlyle's work. He ever fixes his piercing gaze on the man himself. All the man's conventional dignities, his mere outside, his protestations, his fame and his achievements are torn aside. What is the man himself—be he poet, songster, romancer, critic, or historian? What has he to teach us? what has he taught us to do? what will he be like when, naked, he stands at the Judgment Seat, where no secrets are hid? It is in this way that Carlyle reveals to us four great men. And so doing, he reveals himself.

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# Goethe

[1828]

Goethe's literary history appears to us a matter, beyond most others, of rich, subtle and manifold significance; which will require and reward the best study of the best heads, and to the right exposition of which not one but many judgments will be necessary. Considering the highly complex aspect which such a mind of itself presents to us; and, still more, taking into account the state of English opinion in respect of it, there certainly seem few literary questions of our time so perplexed, dubious, perhaps hazardous, as this of the character of Goethe; but few also on which a well-founded, or even a sincere word would be more likely to profit. For our countrymen, at no time indisposed to foreign excellence, but at all times cautious of foreign singularity, have heard much of Goethe; but heard, for the most part, what excited and perplexed rather than instructed them. Vague rumours of the man have, for more than half a century, been humming through our ears: from time to time, we have even seen some distorted, mutilated transcript of his own thoughts, which,

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all obscure and hieroglyphical as it might often seem, failed not to emit here and there a ray of keenest and purest sense; travellers also are still running to and fro, importing the opinions or, at worst, the gossip of foreign countries: so that, by one means or another, many of us have come to understand, that considerably the most distinguished poet and thinker of his age is called Goethe, and lives at Weimar, and must, to all appearance, be an extremely surprising character: but here, unhappily, our knowledge almost terminates; and still must Curiosity, must ingenuous love of Information and mere passive Wonder alike inquire: What manner of man *is* this? How shall we interpret, how shall we even see him? What is his spiritual structure, what at least are the outward form and features of his mind? Has he any real poetic worth; how much to his own people, how much to us?

Reviewers, of great and of small character, have manfully endeavoured to satisfy the British world on these points: but which of us could believe their report? Did it not rather become apparent, as we reflected on the matter, that this Goethe of theirs was not the real man, nay could not be any real man whatever? For what, after all, were their portraits of him but copies, with some retouchings and ornamental appendages, of our grand English original Picture of the German generally?—In itself such a piece of art, as national portraits, under like circumstances, are wont to be; and resembling Goethe, as some unusually expressive Sign of

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the Saracen's Head may resemble the present Sultan of Constantinople!

Did we imagine that much information, or any very deep sagacity were required for avoiding such mistakes, it would ill become us to step forward on this occasion. But surely it is given to every man, if he will but take heed, to know so much as whether or not he *knows*. And nothing can be plainer to us than that if, in the present business, we can report *ought* from our own personal vision and clear hearty belief, it will be a useful novelty in the discussion of it. Let the reader be patient with us then; and according as he finds that we speak honestly and earnestly, or loosely and dishonestly, consider our statement, or dismiss it as unworthy of consideration.

Viewed in his merely external relations, Goethe exhibits an appearance such as seldom occurs in the history of letters, and indeed, from the nature of the case, can seldom occur. A man who, in early life, rising almost at a single bound into the highest reputation over all Europe; by gradual advances, fixing himself more and more firmly in the reverence of his countrymen, ascends silently through many vicissitudes to the supreme intellectual place among them; and now, after half a century, distinguished by convulsions, political, moral and poetical, still reigns, full of years and honours, with a soft undisputed sway; still labouring in his vocation, still forwarding, as with kingly benignity, whatever can profit the

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culture of his nation : such a man might justly attract our notice, were it only by the singularity of his fortune. Supremacies of this sort are rare in modern times ; so universal, and of such continuance, they are almost unexampled. For the age of the Prophets and Theologic Doctors has long since passed away ; and now it is by much slighter, by transient and mere earthly ties, that bodies of men connect themselves with a man. The wisest, most melodious voice cannot in these days pass for a divine one ; the word Inspiration still lingers, but only in the shape of a poetic figure, from which the once earnest, awful and soul-subduing sense has vanished without return. The polity of Literature is called a Republic ; oftener it is an Anarchy, where, by strength or fortune, favourite after favourite rises into splendour and authority, but, like Masaniello, while judging the people, is on the third day deposed and shot. Nay, few such adventurers can attain even this painful pre-eminence : for at most, it is clear, any given age can have but one first man ; many ages have only a crowd of secondary men, each of whom is first in his own eyes : and seldom, at best, can the "Single Person" long keep his station at the head of this wild commonwealth ; most sovereigns are never universally acknowledged, least of all in their lifetime ; few of the acknowledged can reign peaceably to the end.

Of such a perpetual dictatorship Voltaire among the French gives the last European instance ; but even with him it was perhaps

a much less striking affair. Voltaire reigned over a sect, less as their lawgiver than as their general; for he was at bitter enmity with the great numerical majority of his nation, by whom his services, far from being acknowledged as benefits, were execrated as abominations. But Goethe's object has, at all times, been rather to unite than to divide; and though he has not scrupled, as occasion served, to speak forth his convictions distinctly enough on many delicate topics, and seems, in general, to have paid little court to the prejudices or private feelings of any man or body of men, we see not at present that his merits are anywhere disputed, his intellectual endeavours controverted, or his person regarded otherwise than with affection and respect. In later years, too, the advanced age of the poet has invested him with another sort of dignity; and the admiration to which his great qualities give him claim is tempered into a milder, grateful feeling, almost as of sons and grandsons to their common father. Dissentients, no doubt, there are and must be; but, apparently, their cause is not pleaded in words: no man of the smallest note speaks on that side; or at most, such men may question, not the worth of Goethe, but the cant and idle affectation with which, in many quarters, this must be promulgated and bepraised. Certainly there is not, probably there never was, in any European country, a writer who, with so cunning a style, and so deep, so abstruse a sense, ever found so many readers. For, from the peasant to the king, from the callow

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dilettante and innamorato, to the grave transcendental philosopher, men of all degrees and dispositions are familiar with the writings of Goethe: each studies them with affection, with a faith which, "where it cannot unriddle, learns to trust"; each takes with him what he is adequate to carry, and departs thankful for his own allotment. Two of Goethe's intensest admirers are Schelling of Munich, and a worthy friend of ours in Berlin; one of these among the deepest men in Europe, the other among the shallowest.

All this is, no doubt, singular enough; and a proper understanding of it would throw light on many things. Whatever we may think of Goethe's ascendancy, the existence of it remains a highly curious fact; and to trace its history, to discover by what steps such influence has been attained, and how so long preserved, were no trivial or unprofitable inquiry. It would be worth while to see so strange a man for his own sake; and here we should see, not only the man himself, and his own progress and spiritual development, but the progress also of his nation: and this at no sluggish or even quiet era, but in times marked by strange revolutions of opinions, by angry controversies, high enthusiasm, novelty of enterprise, and doubtless, in many respects, by rapid advancement: for that the Germans have been, and still are, restlessly struggling forward, with honest unwearied effort, sometimes with enviable success, no one, who knows them, will deny; and as little, that

in every province of Literature, of Art and humane accomplishment, the influence, often the direct guidance of Goethe may be recognised. The history of his mind is, in fact, at the same time, the history of German culture in his day: for whatever excellence this individual might realise has sooner or later been acknowledged and appropriated by his country; and the title of *Musagetes*, which his admirers give him, is perhaps, in sober strictness, not unmerited. Be it for good or for evil, there is certainly no German, since the days of Luther, whose life can occupy so large a space in the intellectual history of that people.

In this point of view, were it in no other, Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, so soon as it is completed, may deserve to be reckoned one of his most interesting works. We speak not of its literary merits, though in that respect, too, we must say that few Autobiographies have come in our way, where so difficult a matter was so successfully handled; where perfect knowledge could be found united so kindly with perfect tolerance; and a personal narrative, moving along in soft clearness, showed us a man, and the objects that environed him, under an aspect so verisimilar, yet so lovely, with an air dignified and earnest, yet graceful, cheerful, even gay: a story as of a Patriarch to his children; such, indeed, as few men can be called upon to relate, and few, if called upon, could relate so well. What would we give for such an Autobiography of Shakspeare, of Milton, even of Pope or Swift!

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The *Dichtung und Wahrheit* has been censured considerably in England; but not, we are inclined to believe, with any insight into its proper meaning. The misfortune of the work among us was, that we did not know the narrator *before* his narrative; and could not judge what sort of narrative he was bound to give, in these circumstances, or whether he was bound to give any at all. We saw nothing of his situation; heard only the sound of his voice; and hearing it, never doubted but he must be perorating in official garments from the rostrum, instead of speaking trustfully by the fireside. For the chief ground of offence seemed to be, that the story was not noble enough; that it entered on details of too poor and private a nature; verged here and there towards garrulity; was not, in one word, written in the style of what we call a *gentleman*. Whether it might be written in the style of a *man*, and how far these two styles might be compatible, and what might be their relative worth and preferableness, was a deeper question; to which apparently no heed had been given. Yet herein lay the very cream of the matter; for Goethe was not writing to "persons of quality" in England, but to persons of heart and head in Europe: a somewhat different problem perhaps, and requiring a somewhat different solution. As to this ignobleness and freedom of detail, especially, we may say, that, to a German, few accusations could appear more surprising than this, which, with us, constitutes the head and front of his offending.

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Goethe, in his own country, far from being accused of undue familiarity towards his readers, had, up to that date, been labouring under precisely the opposite charge. It was his stateliness, his reserve, his indifference, his contempt for the public, that were censured. Strange, almost inexplicable, as many of his works might appear; loud, sorrowful and altogether stolid as might be the criticisms they underwent, no word of explanation could be wrung from him; he had never even deigned to write a preface. And in later and juster days, when the study of Poetry came to be prosecuted in another spirit, and it was found that Goethe was standing, not like a culprit to plead for himself before the literary *plebeians*, but like a high teacher and preacher, speaking for truth, to whom both *plebeians* and *patricians* were bound to give all ear, the outward difficulty of interpreting his works began indeed to vanish; but enough still remained, nay increased curiosity had given rise to new difficulties, and deeper inquiries. Not only *what* were these works, but *how* did they originate, became questions for the critic. Yet several of Goethe's chief productions, and of his smaller poems nearly the whole, seemed so intimately interwoven with his private history, that, without some knowledge of this, no answer to such questions could be given. Nay commentaries have been written on single pieces of his, endeavouring, by way of guess, to supply this deficiency. We can thus judge whether, to the Germans, such minuteness



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of exposition in this *Dichtung und Wahrheit* may have seemed a sin. Few readers of Goethe, we believe, but would wish rather to see it extended than curtailed.

It is our duty also to remark, if any one be still unaware of it, that the *Memoirs of Goethe*, published some years ago in London, can have no real concern with this Autobiography: The rage of hunger is an excuse for much; otherwise that German Translator, whom indignant Reviewers have proved to know no German, were a highly reprehensible man. His work, it appears, is done from the French, and shows subtractions, and what is worse, additions. But the unhappy Dragoman has already been chastised, perhaps too sharply. If, warring with the reefs and breakers and cross eddies of Life, he still hover on this side the shadow of Night, and any word of ours might reach him, we would rather say: Courage, Brother! grow honest, and times will mend!

It would appear, then, that for inquirers into Foreign Literature, for all men anxious to see and understand the European world as it lies around them, a great problem is presented in this Goethe; a singular, highly significant phenomenon, and now also means more or less complete for ascertaining its significance. A man of wonderful, nay unexampled reputation and intellectual influence among forty millions of reflective, serious and cultivated men, invites us to study him; and

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to determine for ourselves, whether and how far such influence has been salutary, such reputation merited. That this call will one day be answered, that Goethe will be seen and judged of in his real character among us, appears certain enough. His name, long familiar everywhere, has now awakened the attention of critics in all European countries to his works: he is studied wherever true study exists: eagerly studied even in France; nay, some considerable knowledge of his nature and spiritual importance seems already to prevail there.

For ourselves, meanwhile, in giving all due weight to so curious an exhibition of opinion, it is doubtless our part, at the same time, to beware that we do not give it too much. This universal sentiment of admiration is wonderful, is interesting enough; but it must not lead us astray. We English stand as yet without the sphere of it; neither will we plunge blindly in, but enter considerately, or, if we see good, keep aloof from it altogether. Fame, we may understand, is no sure test of merit, but only a probability of such: it is an accident, not a property, of a man; like light, it can give little or nothing, but at most may show what is given; often it is but a false glare, dazzling the eyes of the vulgar, lending by casual extrinsic splendour the brightness and manifold glance of the diamond to pebbles of no value. A man is in all cases simply *the* man, of the same intrinsic worth and weakness, whether his worth and weakness lie hidden

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in the depths of his own consciousness, or be betrumpered and beshouted from end to end of the habitable globe. These are plain truths, which no one should lose sight of; though, whether in love or in anger, for praise or for condemnation, most of us are too apt to forget them. But least of all can it become the critic to "follow a multitude to do evil", even when that evil is excess of admiration: on the contrary, it will behove him to lift up his voice, how feeble soever, how unheeded soever, against the common delusion; from which, if he can save, or help to save, any mortal, his endeavours will have been repaid.

With these things in some measure before us, we must remind our readers of another influence at work in this affair, and one acting, as we think, in the contrary direction. That pitiful enough desire for "originality", which lurks and acts in all minds, will rather, we imagine, lead the critic of Foreign Literature to adopt the negative than the affirmative with regard to Goethe. If a writer indeed feel that he is writing for England alone, invisibly and inaudibly to the rest of the Earth, the temptations may be pretty equally balanced; if he write for some small conclave, which he mistakenly thinks the representative of England, they may sway this way or that, as it chances. But writing in such isolated spirit is no longer possible. Traffic, with its swift ships, is uniting all nations into one; Europe at large is becoming more and more one public; and in this public, the voices for Goethe, compared

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with those against him, are in the proportion, as we reckon them, both as to the number and value, of perhaps a hundred to one. We take in, not Germany alone, but France and Italy; not the Schlegels and Schellings, but the Manzoni and De Staëls. The bias of originality, therefore, may lie to the side of censure; and whoever among us shall step forward, with such knowledge as our common critics have of Goethe, to enlighten the European public, by contradiction in this matter, displays a heroism, which, in estimating his other merits, ought nowise to be forgotten.

Our own view of the case coincides, we confess, in some degree with that of the majority. We reckon that Goethe's fame has, to a considerable extent, been deserved; that his influence has been of high benefit to his own country; nay more, that it promises to be of benefit to us, and to all other nations. The essential grounds of this opinion, which to explain minutely were a long, indeed boundless task, we may state without many words. We find, then, in Goethe, an Artist, in the high and ancient meaning of that term; in the meaning which it may have borne long ago among the masters of Italian painting, and the fathers of Poetry in England; we say that we trace in the creations of this man, belonging in every sense to our own time, some touches of that old, divine spirit, which had long passed away from among us, nay which, as has often been laboriously demonstrated, was not to return to this world any more.

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Or perhaps we come nearer our meaning, if we say that in Goethe we discover by far the most striking instance, in our time, of a writer who is, in strict speech, what Philosophy can call a Man. He is neither noble nor plebeian, neither liberal nor servile, nor infidel nor devotee; but the best excellence of *all* these, joined in pure union; "a clear and universal *Man*". Goethe's poetry is no separate faculty, no mental handicraft; but the voice of the whole harmonious manhood: nay it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry. All good men may be called poets in act, or in word; all good poets are so in both. But Goethe besides appears to us as a person of that deep endowment, and gifted vision, of that experience also and sympathy in the ways of all men, which qualify him to stand forth, not only as the literary ornament, but in many respects too as the Teacher and exemplar of his age. For, to say nothing of his natural gifts, he has cultivated himself and his art, he has studied how to live and to write, with a fidelity, an unwearied earnestness, of which there is no other living instance; of which, among British poets especially, Wordsworth alone offers any resemblance. And this in our view is the result: To our minds, in these soft, melodious imaginations of his, there is embodied the Wisdom which is proper to this time; the beautiful, the religious Wisdom, which may still, with something of its old impressiveness, speak to the whole soul; still,

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in these hard, unbelieving utilitarian days, reveal to us glimpses of the Unseen but not unreal World, that so the Actual and the Ideal may again meet together, and clear Knowledge be again wedded to Religion, in the life and business of men.

Such is our conviction or persuasion with regard to the poetry of Goethe. Could we demonstrate this opinion to be true, could we even exhibit it with that degree of clearness and consistency which it has attained in our own thoughts, Goethe were, on our part, sufficiently recommended to the best attention of all thinking men. But, unhappily, it is not a subject susceptible of demonstration: the merits and characteristics of a Poet are not to be set forth by logic; but to be gathered by personal, and as in this case it must be, by deep and careful inspection of his works. Nay Goethe's world is every way so different from ours; it costs us such effort, we have so much to remember, and so much to forget, before we can transfer ourselves in any measure into his peculiar point of vision, that a right study of him, for an Englishman, even of ingenuous, open, inquisitive mind, becomes unusually difficult; for a fixed, decided, contemptuous Englishman, next to impossible. To a reader of the first class, helps may be given, explanations will remove many a difficulty; beauties that lay hidden may be made apparent; and directions, adapted to his actual position, will at length guide him into the proper track for such an inquiry. All this,



however, must be a work of progression and detail. To do our part in it, from time to time, must rank among the best duties of an English Foreign Review. Meanwhile, our present endeavour limits itself within far narrower bounds. We cannot aim to make Goethe known, but only to prove that he is worthy of being known; at most, to point out, as it were afar off, the path by which some knowledge of him may be obtained. A slight glance at his general literary character and procedure, and one or two of his chief productions which throw light on these, must for the present suffice.

A French diplomatic personage, contemplating Goethe's physiognomy, is said to have observed: *Voilà un homme qui a eu beaucoup de chagrins*. A truer version of the matter, Goethe himself seems to think, would have been: Here is a man who has struggled toughly; who has *es sich recht sauer werden lassen*. Goethe's life, whether as a writer and thinker, or as a living active man, has indeed been a life of effort, of earnest toilsome endeavour after all excellence. Accordingly, his intellectual progress, his spiritual and moral history, as it may be gathered from his successive Works, furnishes, with us, no small portion of the pleasure and profit we derive from perusing them. Participating deeply in all the influences of his age, he has from the first, at every new epoch, stood forth to elucidate the new circumstances of the time; to offer the instruc-

tion, the solace, which that time required. His literary life divides itself into two portions widely different in character: the products of the first, once so new and original, have long, either directly or through the thousand thousand imitations of them, been familiar to us; with the products of the second, equally original, and in our day far more precious, we are yet little acquainted. These two classes of works stand curiously related with each other; at first view, in strong contradiction, yet, in truth, connected together by the strictest sequence. For Goethe has not only suffered and mourned in bitter agony under the spiritual perplexities of his time; but he has also mastered these, he is above them, and has shown others how to rise above them. At one time, we found him in darkness, and now he is in light; he was once an Unbeliever, and now he is a Believer; and he believes, moreover, not by denying his unbelief, but by following it out; not by stopping short, still less turning back, in his inquiries, but by resolutely prosecuting them. This, it appears to us, is a case of singular interest, and rarely exemplified, if at all elsewhere, in these our days. How has this man, to whom the world once offered nothing but blackness, denial and despair, attained to that better vision which now shows it to him, not tolerable only, but full of solemnity and loveliness? How has the belief of a Saint been united in this high and true mind with the clearness of a Sceptic; the devout spirit of a Fenelon

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made to blend in soft harmony with the gaiety, the sarcasm, the shrewdness of a Voltaire?

Goethe's two earliest works are *Götz von Berlichingen* and the *Sorrows of Werter*. The boundless influence and popularity they gained, both at home and abroad, is well known. It was they that established almost at once his literary fame in his own country; and even determined his subsequent private history, for they brought him into contact with the Duke of Weimar; in connexion with whom, the Poet, engaged in manifold duties, political as well as literary, has lived for fifty-four years, and still, in honourable retirement, continues to live. Their effects over Europe at large were not less striking than in Germany.

"It would be difficult", observes a writer on this subject, "to name two books which have exercised a deeper influence on the subsequent literature of Europe, than these two performances of a young author; his first-fruits, the produce of his twenty-fourth year. *Werter* appeared to seize the hearts of men in all quarters of the world, and to utter for them the word which they had long been waiting to hear. As usually happens, too, this same word, once uttered, was soon abundantly repeated; spoken in all dialects, and chaunted through all notes of the gamut, till the sound of it had grown a weariness rather than a pleasure. Sceptical sentimentality, view-hunting, love, friendship, suicide, and desperation, became the staple of literary ware; and though the epidemic, after a long course of years, subsided in Germany, it re-appeared with various modifications in other countries, and everywhere abundant traces of its good

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and bad effects are still to be discerned. The fortune of *Berlichingen with the Iron Hand*, though less sudden, was by no means less exalted. In his own country, Götz, though he now stands solitary and childless, became the parent of an innumerable progeny of chivalry plays, feudal delineations, and poetico-antiquarian performances; which, though long ago deceased, made noise enough in their day and generation: and with ourselves, his influence has been perhaps still more remarkable. Sir Walter Scott's first literary enterprise was a translation of *Götz von Berlichingen*; and, if genius could be communicated like instruction, we might call this work of Goethe's the prime cause of *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*, with all that has followed from the same creative hand. Truly, a grain of seed that has lighted on the right soil! For if not firmer and fairer, it has grown to be taller and broader than any other tree; and all the nations of the earth are still yearly gathering of its fruit.

"But overlooking these spiritual genealogies, which bring little certainty and little profit, it may be sufficient to observe of *Berlichingen* and *Werter*, that they stand prominent among the causes, or, at the very least, among the signals of a great change in modern literature. The former directed men's attention with a new force to the picturesque effects of the Past; and the latter, for the first time, attempted the more accurate delineation of a class of feelings deeply important to modern minds, but for which our elder poetry offered no exponent, and perhaps could offer none, because they are feelings that arise from Passion incapable of being converted into Action, and belong chiefly to an age as indolent, cultivated and unbelieving as our own. This, notwithstanding the dash of falsehood which may exist in *Werter* itself, and the boundless delirium of extravagance which it called forth in others, is a high praise which cannot justly

be denied it. The English reader ought also to understand that our current version of *Werter* is mutilated and inaccurate: it comes to us through the all-subduing medium of the French, shorn of its caustic strength, with its melancholy rendered maudlin, its hero reduced from the stately gloom of a broken-hearted poet to the tearful wrangling of a dyspeptic tailor."

To the same dark wayward mood, which, in *Werter*, pours itself forth in bitter wailings over human life; and, in *Berlichingen*, appears as a fond and sad looking back into the Past, belong various other productions of Goethe's; for example, the *Mitschuldigen*, and the first idea of *Faust*, which, however, was not realised in actual composition till a calmer period of his history. Of this early harsh and crude, yet fervid and genial period, *Werter* may stand here as the representative; and, viewed in its external and internal relation, will help to illustrate both the writer and the public he was writing for.

At the present day, it would be difficult for us, satisfied, nay sated to nausea, as we have been with the doctrines of Sentimentality, to estimate the boundless interest which *Werter* must have excited when first given to the world. It was then new in all senses; it was wonderful, yet wished for, both in its own country and in every other. The Literature of Germany had as yet but partially awakened from its long torpor: deep learning, deep reflection, have at no time been wanting there; but the creative spirit had for above a century

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been almost extinct. Of late, however, the Ramlers, Rabeners, Gellerts, had attained to no inconsiderable polish of style; Klopstock's *Messias* had called forth the admiration, and perhaps still more the pride, of the country, as a piece of art; a high enthusiasm was abroad; Lessing had roused the minds of men to a deeper and truer interest in Literature, had even decidedly begun to introduce a heartier, warmer and more expressive style. The Germans were on the alert; in expectation, or at least in full readiness for some far bolder impulse; waiting for the Poet that might speak to them from the heart to the heart. It was in Goethe that such a Poet was to be given them.

Nay the Literature of other countries, placid, self-satisfied as they might seem, was in an equally expectant condition. Everywhere, as in Germany, there was polish and languor, external glitter and internal vacuity; it was not fire, but a picture of fire, at which no soul could be warmed. Literature had sunk from its former vocation: it no longer held the mirror up to Nature; no longer reflected, in many-coloured expressive symbols, the actual passions, the hopes, sorrows, joys of living men; but dwelt in a remote conventional world, in *Castles of Otranto*, in *Epigoniads* and *Leonidas*, among clear, metallic heroes, and white, high, stainless beauties, in whom the drapery and elocution were nowise the least important qualities. Men thought it right that the heart should swell into magnanimity with

Caractacus and Cato, and melt into sorrow with many an Eliza and Adelaide; but the heart was in no haste either to swell or to melt. Some pulses of heroical sentiment, a few *unnatural* tears might, with conscientious readers, be actually squeezed forth on such occasions: but they came only from the surface of the mind; nay, had the conscientious man considered of the matter, he would have found that they ought not to have come at all. Our only English poet of the period was Goldsmith; a pure, clear, genuine spirit, had he been of depth or strength sufficient: his *Vicar of Wakefield* remains the best of all modern Idyls; but it is and was nothing more. And consider our leading writers; consider the poetry of Gray, and the prose of Johnson. The first a laborious mosaic, through the hard stiff lineaments of which little life or true grace could be expected to look: real feeling, and all freedom of expressing it, are sacrificed to pomp, to cold splendour; for vigour we have a certain mouthing vehemence, too elegant indeed to be tumid, yet essentially foreign to the heart, and seen to extend no deeper than the mere voice and gestures. Were it not for his *Letters*, which are full of warm exuberant power, we might almost doubt whether Gray was a man of genius; nay, was a living man at all, and not rather some thousand-times more cunningly devised poetical turning-loom, than that of Swift's Philosophers in Laputa. Johnson's prose is true, indeed, and sound, and full of practical sense: few men have seen

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more clearly into the motives, the interests, the whole walk and conversation of the living busy world as it lay before him; but farther than this busy, and, to most of us, rather prosaic world, he seldom looked: his instruction is for men of business, and in regard to matters of business alone. Prudence is the highest Virtue he can inculcate; and for that finer portion of our nature, that portion of it which belongs essentially to Literature strictly so called, where our highest feelings, our best joys and keenest sorrows, our Doubt, our Love, our Religion reside, he has no word to utter; no remedy, no counsel to give us in our straits; or at most, if, like poor Boswell, the patient is importunate, will answer: "My dear Sir, endeavour to clear your mind of Cant."

The turn which Philosophical speculation had taken in the preceding age corresponded with this tendency, and enhanced its narcotic influences; or was, indeed, properly speaking, the root they had sprung from. Locke, himself a clear, humble-minded, patient, reverent, nay religious man, had paved the way for banishing religion from the world. Mind, by being modelled in men's imaginations into a Shape, a Visibility; and reasoned of as if it had been some composite, divisible and remanent substance, some finer chemical salt, or some piece of logical joinery, began to lose its immaterial, mysterious, divine though invisible character: it was tacitly figured as something that might, were our organs fine enough



*seen.* Yet who had ever seen it? Who could ever see it? Thus by degrees it passed into a Doubt, a Relation, some faint Possibility; and at last into a highly-probable Nonentity. Following Locke's footsteps, the French had discovered that "as the stomach secretes Chyle, so does the brain secrete Thought". And what then was Religion, what was Poetry, what was all high and heroic feeling? Chiefly a delusion; often a false and pernicious one. Poetry, indeed, was still to be preserved; because Poetry was a useful thing: men needed amusement, and loved to amuse themselves with Poetry: the playhouse was a pretty lounge of an evening; then there were so many precepts, satirical, didactic, so much more impressive for the rhyme; to say nothing of your occasional verses, birthday odes, epithalamiums, epicediums, by which "the dream of existence may be so highly sweetened and embellished". Nay, does not Poetry, acting on the imaginations of men, excite them to daring purposes; sometimes, as in the case of Tyrtæus, to fight better; in which wise may it not rank as a useful stimulant to man, along with Opium and Scotch Whisky, the manufacture of which is allowed by law? In Heaven's name, then, let Poetry be preserved.

With Religion, however, it fared somewhat worse. In the eyes of Voltaire and his disciples, Religion was a superfluity, indeed a nuisance. Here, it is true, his followers have since found that he went too far; that Religion, being a great sanction to civil mor-

ality, is of use for keeping society in order, at least the lower classes, who have not the feeling of Honour in due force; and therefore, as a considerable help to the Constable and Hangman, *ought* decidedly to be kept up. But such toleration is the fruit only of later days. In those times, there was no question but how to get rid of it, root and branch, the sooner the better. A gleam of zeal, nay we will call it, however basely alloyed, a glow of real enthusiasm and love of truth, may have animated the minds of these men, as they looked abroad on the pestilent jungle of Superstition, and hoped to clear the earth of it forever. This little glow, so alloyed, so contaminated with pride and other poor or bad admixtures, was the last which thinking men were to experience in Europe for a time. So is it always in regard to Religious Belief, how degraded and defaced soever: the delight of the Destroyer and Denier is no pure delight, and must soon pass away. With bold, with skilful hand, Voltaire set his torch to the jungle: it blazed aloft to heaven; and the flame exhilarated and comforted the incendiaries; but, unhappily, such comfort could not continue. Ere long this flame, with its cheerful light and heat, was gone: the jungle, it is true, had been consumed; but, with its entanglements, its shelter and its spots of verdure also; and the black, chill, ashy swamp, left in its stead, seemed for a time a greater evil than the other.

In such a state of painful obstruction, extending itself everywhere over Europe, and

already master of Germany, lay the general mind, when Goethe first appeared in Literature. Whatever belonged to the finer nature of man had withered under the Harmattan breath of Doubt, or passed away in the conflagration of open Infidelity; and now, where the Tree of Life once bloomed and brought fruit of goodliest savour, there was only barrenness and desolation. To such as could find sufficient interest in the day-labour and day-wages of earthly existence; in the resources of the five bodily Senses, and of Vanity, the only mental sense which yet flourished, which flourished indeed with gigantic vigour, matters were still not so bad. Such men helped themselves forward, as they will generally do; and found the world, if not an altogether proper sphere (for every man, disguise it as he may, has a *soul* in him), at least a tolerable enough place; where, by one item and another, some comfort, or show of comfort, might from time to time be got up, and these few years, especially since they were so few, be spent without much murmuring. But to men afflicted with the "malady of Thought", some devoutness of temper was an inevitable heritage: to such the noisy forum of the world could appear but an empty, altogether insufficient concern; and the whole scene of life had become hopeless enough. Unhappily, such feelings are yet by no means so infrequent with ourselves, that we need stop here to depict them. That state of Unbelief from which the Germans do seem to be in some measure delivered, still presses with incu-

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bus force on the greater part of Europe; and nation after nation, each in its own way, feels that the first of all moral problems is how to cast it off, or how to rise above it. Governments naturally attempt the first expedient; Philosophers, in general, the second.

The poet, says Schiller, is a citizen not only of his country, but of his time. Whatever occupies and interests men in general, will interest him still more. That nameless Unrest, the blind struggle of a soul in bondage, that high, sad, longing Discontent, which was agitating every bosom, had driven Goethe almost to despair. All felt it; he alone could give it voice. And here lies the secret of his popularity; in his deep, susceptible heart, he felt a thousand times more keenly what every one was feeling; with the creative gift which belonged to him as a poet, he bodied it forth into visible shape, gave it a local habitation and a name; and so made himself the spokesman of his generation. *Werter* is but the cry of that dim, rooted pain, under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing: it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and heart and voice, all over Europe, loudly and at once respond to it. True, it prescribes no remedy; for that was a far different, far harder enterprise, to which other years and a higher culture were required; but even this utterance of the pain, even this little, for the present, is ardently grasped at, and with eager sympathy appropriated in every bosom. If Byron's life-weariness, his moody

melancholy, and mad stormful indignation, borne on the tones of a wild and quite artless melody, could pierce so deep into many a British heart, now that the whole matter is no longer new,—is indeed old and trite,—we may judge with what vehement acceptance this *Werter* must have been welcomed, coming as it did like a voice from unknown regions; the first thrilling peal of that impassioned dirge, which, in country after country, men's ears have listened to, till they were deaf to all else. For *Werter*, infusing itself into the core and whole spirit of Literature, gave birth to a race of Sentimentalists, who have raged and wailed in every part of the world; till better light dawned on them, or at worst, exhausted Nature laid herself to sleep, and it was discovered that lamenting was an unproductive labour. These funereal choristers, in Germany a loud, haggard, tumultuous, as well as tearful class, were named the *Kraftmänner*, or Power-men; but have all long since, like sick children, cried themselves to rest. Byron was our English Sentimentalist and Power-man; the strongest of his kind in Europe; the wildest, the gloomiest, and it may be hoped the last. For what good is it to “whine, put finger i’ the eye, and sob”, in such a case? Still more, to snarl and snap in malignant wise, “like dog distract, or monkey sick”? Why should we quarrel with our existence, here as it lies before us, our field and inheritance, to make or to mar, for better or for worse; in which, too, so many noblest men have, ever from the beginning, warring

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with the very evils we war with, both made and been what will be venerated to all time?

What shapest thou here at the World? 'Tis shapen long ago;

The Maker shaped it, *he* thought it best even so.

Thy lot is appointed, go follow its hest;

Thy journey's begun, thou must move and not rest;

For sorrow and care cannot alter thy case,

And running, not raging, will win thee the race.

Meanwhile, of the philosophy which reigns in *Werter*, and which it has been our lot to hear so often repeated elsewhere, we may here produce a short specimen. The following passage will serve our turn; and be, if we mistake not, new to the mere English reader:

“That the life of man is but a dream, has come into many a head; and with me, too, some feeling of that sort is ever at work. When I look upon the limits within which man's powers of action and inquiry are hemmed in; when I see how all effort issues simply in procuring supply for wants, which again have no object but continuing this poor existence of ours; and then, that all satisfaction on certain points of inquiry is but a dreaming resignation, while you paint, with many-coloured figures and gay prospects, the walls you sit imprisoned by,—all this, Wilhelm, makes me dumb. I return to my own heart, and find there such a world! Yet a world, too, more in forecast and dim desire, than in vision and living power. And then all swims before my mind's eye; and so I smile, and again go dreaming on as others do.

“That children know not what they want, all conscientious tutors and education-philosophers

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have long been agreed : but that full-grown men, as well as children, stagger to and fro along this earth ; like these, not knowing whence they come or whither they go ; aiming, just as little, after true objects ; governed just as well by biscuit, cakes and birchrods : this is what no one likes to believe ; and yet it seems to me, the fact is lying under our very nose.

“I will confess to thee, for I know what thou wouldst say to me on this point, that those are the happiest, who, like children, live from one day to the other, carrying their dolls about with them, to dress and undress ; gliding also, with the highest respect, before the drawer where mamma has locked the gingerbread ; and, when they do get the wished-for morsel, devouring it with puffed-out cheeks, and crying, More !—These are the fortunate of the earth. Well is it likewise with those who can label their rag-gathering employments, or perhaps their passions, with pompous titles, and represent them to mankind as gigantic undertakings for its welfare and salvation. Happy the man who can live in such wise ! But he who, in his humility, observes where all this issues, who sees how feebly any small thriving citizen can trim his patch of garden into a Paradise, and with what unbroken heart even the unhappy crawls along under his burden, and all are alike ardent to see the light of this sun but one minute longer ;—yes, he is silent, and he too forms his world out of himself, and he too is happy because he is a man. And then, hemmed-in as he is, he ever keeps in his heart the sweet feeling of freedom, and that this dungeon—can be left when he likes.”

What Goethe's own temper and habit of thought must have been, while the materials of such a work were forming themselves within

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his heart, might be in some degree conjectured, and he has himself informed us. We quote the following passage from his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The writing of *Werter*, it would seem, indicating so gloomy, almost desperate a state of mind in the author, was at the same time a symptom, indeed a cause, of his now having got delivered from such melancholy. Far from recommending suicide to others, as *Werter* has often been accused of doing, it was the first proof that Goethe himself had abandoned these "hypochondriacal crotchets": the imaginary "Sorrows" had helped to free him from many real ones.

"Such weariness of life", he says, "has its physical and its spiritual causes; those we shall leave to the Doctor, these to the Moralist, for investigation; and in this so trite matter, touch only on the main point, where that phenomenon expresses itself most distinctly. All pleasure in life is founded on the regular return of external things. The alternations of day and night, of the seasons, of the blossoms and fruits, and whatever else meets us from epoch to epoch with the offer and command of enjoyment,—these are the essential springs of earthly existence. The more open we are to such enjoyments, the happier we feel ourselves; but, should the vicissitude of these appearances come and go without our taking interest in it; should such benignant invitations address themselves to us in vain, then follows the greatest misery, the heaviest malady; one grows to view life as a sickening burden. We have heard of the Englishman who hanged himself, to be no more troubled with daily putting off and on his clothes. I knew an honest gardener, the overseer of some extensive pleasure-grounds, who once

"But what most pains the young man of sensibility is, the incessant return of our faults : for how long is it before we learn, that, in cultivating our virtues, we nourish our faults along with them ! The former rest on the latter, as on their roots ; and these ramify themselves in secret as strongly and as wide, as those others in the open light. Now, as we for most part practise our virtues with forthought and will, but by our faults are over-

and we are never sure of them.

or destiny ; but they do flee away, they fluctuate, us, by our own blame or that of others, by accident mere natural events : such blessings flee away from moon and stars. And yet these things are not cannot hold it fast, any more than we can hold sun, the few, all fluctuates up and down ; so that we of the active, the goodwill of the many, the love of the great, the protection of the powerful, the help their course, as well as the seasons. The favour of in himself, at least in others, that moral epochs have "Farther, a young man soon comes to find, if not

returns.

aloft, is destroyed : it seems transient, like all that lasting endurance, which supports and bears it is in fact lost. That idea of infinitude, of ever- and by the second, the highest significance of love it is said justly, is the only one ; for in the second, of satiety than the return of love. The first love, "Nothing, however, will sooner induce this feeling supposed.

cluded character, was more frequent than might be and, at this time, among men of meditative, se- lifelessness, which not seldom issues in suicide, once be red. These are specially the symptoms of and wished that, by way of change, it would for with dissatisfaction the spring again growing green, one of our most distinguished men, that he viewed ever passing, then, from east to west ? It is told of splendidly exclaimed : Shall I see these clouds for

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taken unexpectedly, the former seldom gives us much joy, the latter are continually giving us sorrow and distress. Indeed, here lies the subtlest difficulty in Self-knowledge, the difficulty which almost renders it impossible. But figure, in addition to all this, the heat of youthful blood, an imagination easily fascinated and paralysed by individual objects; farther, the wavering commotions of the day; and you will find that an impatient striving to free oneself from such a pressure was no unnatural state.

“ However, these gloomy contemplations, which, if a man yield to them, will lead him to boundless lengths, could not have so decidedly developed themselves in our young German minds, had not some outward cause excited and forwarded us in this sorrowful employment. Such a cause existed for us in the Literature, especially the Poetical Literature, of England, the great qualities of which are accompanied by a certain earnest melancholy, which it imparts to every one that occupies himself with it.

“ In such an element, with such an environment of circumstances, with studies and tastes of this sort; harassed by unsatisfied desires, externally nowhere called forth to important action; with the sole prospect of dragging on a languid, spiritless, mere civic life,—we had recurred, in our disconsolate pride, to the thought that life, when it no longer suited one, might be cast aside at pleasure; and had helped ourselves hereby, stintedly enough, over the crosses and tediums of the time. These sentiments were so universal, that *Werter*, on this very account, could produce the greatest effect; striking-in everywhere with the dominant humour, and representing the interior of a sickly youthful heart, in a visible and palpable shape. How

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accurately the English have known this sorrow, might be seen from these few significant lines, written before the appearance of *Werter*;

To griefs congenial prone,

More wounds than nature gave he knew,

While misery's form his fancy drew

In dark ideal hues, and horrors not its own.

"Self-murder is an occurrence in men's affairs which, how much soever it may have already been discussed and commented upon, excites an interest in every mortal; and, at every new era, must be discussed again. Montesquieu confers on his heroes and great men the right of putting themselves to death when they see good; observing, that it must stand at the will of every one to conclude the Fifth Act of his Tragedy whenever he thinks best. Here, however, our business lies not with persons who, in activity, have led an important life, who have spent their days for some mighty empire, or for the cause of freedom; and whom one may forbear to censure, when, seeing the high ideal purpose which had inspired them vanish from the earth, they meditate pursuing it to that other undiscovered country. Our business here is with persons to whom, properly from want of activity, and in the peaceablest condition imaginable, life has nevertheless, by their exorbitant requisitions on themselves, become a burden. As I myself was in this predicament, and know best what pain I suffered in it, what efforts it cost me to escape from it, I shall not hide the speculations I, from time to time, considerably prosecuted, as to the various modes of death one had to choose from.

"It is something so unnatural for a man to break loose from himself, not only to hurt, but to annihilate himself, that he for the most part catches at means of a mechanical sort for putting his pur-

pose in execution. When Ajax falls on his sword, it is the weight of his body that performs this service for him. When the warrior adjures his armour-bearer to slay him, rather than that he come into the hands of the enemy, this is likewise an external force which he secures for himself; only a moral instead of a physical one. Women seek in the water a cooling for their desperation; and the highly mechanical means of pistol-shooting insures a quick act with the smallest effort. Hanging is a death one mentions unwillingly, because it is an ignoble one. In England it may happen more readily than elsewhere, because from youth upwards you there see that punishment frequent without being specially ignominious. By poison, by opening of veins, men aim but at parting slowly from life; and the most refined, the speediest, the most painless death, by means of an asp, was worthy of a Queen, who had spent her life in pomp and luxurious pleasure. All these, however, are external helps; are enemies, with which a man, that he may fight against himself, makes league.

“When I considered these various methods, and farther, looked abroad over history, I could find among all suicides no one that had gone about this deed with such greatness and freedom of spirit as the Emperor Otho. This man, beaten indeed as a general, yet nowise reduced to extremities, determines, for the good of the Empire, which already in some measure belonged to him, and for the saving of so many thousands, to leave the world. With his friends he passes a gay festive night, and next morning it is found that with his own hand he has plunged a sharp dagger into his heart. This sole act seemed to me worthy of imitation; and I convinced myself that whoever could not proceed herein as Otho had done, was not entitled to resolve on renouncing life. By this conviction, I saved myself from the purpose, or indeed more properly

speaking, from the whim, of suicide, which in those fair peaceful times had insinuated itself into the mind of indolent youth. Among a considerable collection of arms I possessed a costly well-ground dagger. This I laid down nightly beside my bed; and before extinguishing the light, I tried whether I could succeed in sending the sharp point an inch or two deep into my breast. But as I truly never could succeed, I at last took to laughing at myself; threw away all these hypochondriacal crochets, and determined to live. To do this with cheerfulness, however, I required to have some poetical task given me, wherein all that I had felt, thought, or dreamed on this weighty business might be spoken forth. With such view, I endeavoured to collect the elements which for a year or two had been floating about in me; I represented to myself the circumstances which had most oppressed and afflicted me: but nothing of all this would take form; there was wanting an incident, a fable, in which I might embody it.

"All at once I hear tidings of Jerusalem's death; and directly following the general rumour, came the most precise and circumstantial description of the business; and in this instant the plan of *Werter* was invented: the whole shot together from all sides, and became a solid mass; as the water in the vessel, which already stood on the point of freezing, is by the slightest motion changed at once into firm ice."

A wide and every way most important interval divides *Werter*, with its sceptical philosophy and 'hypochondriacal crochets', from Goethe's next Novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, published some twenty years afterwards. This work belongs, in all senses, to the second and

founder period of Goethe's life, and may indeed serve as the fullest, if perhaps not the purest, impress of it; being written with due forethought, at various times, during a period of no less than ten years. Considered as a piece of Art, there was much to be said on *Meister*; all which, however, lies beyond our present purpose. We are here looking at the work chiefly as a document for the writer's history; and in this point of view, it certainly seems, as contrasted with its more popular precursor, to deserve our best attention: for the problem which had been stated in *Werter*, with despair of its solution, is here solved. The lofty enthusiasm, which, wandering wildly over the universe, found no resting place, has here reached its appointed home; and lives in harmony with what long appeared to threaten it with annihilation. Anarchy has now become Peace; the once gloomy and perturbed spirit is now serene, cheerfully vigorous, and rich in good fruits. Neither, which is most important of all, has this Peace been attained by a surrender to Necessity, or any compact with Delusion; a seeming blessing, such as years and dispiritment will of themselves bring to most men, and which is indeed no blessing, since even continued battle is better than destruction or captivity; and peace of this sort is like that of Galgacus's Romans, who "called it peace when they had made a desert". Here the ardent high-aspiring youth has grown into the calmest man, yet with increase and not loss of ardour, and with aspirations higher

as well as clearer. For he has conquered his unbelief; the Ideal has been built on the Actual; no longer floats vaguely in darkness and regions of dreams, but rests in light, on the firm ground of human interest and business, as in its true scene, on its true basis.

It is wonderful to see with what softness the scepticism of Jarno, the commercial spirit of Werner, the reposing polished manhood of Lothario and the Uncle, the unearthly enthusiasm of the Harper, the gay animal vivacity of Philina, the mystic, ethereal, almost spiritual nature of Mignon, are blended together in this work; how justice is done to each; how each lives freely in his proper element, in his proper form; and how, as Wilhelm himself, the mild-hearted, all-hoping, all-believing Wilhelm, struggles forward towards his world of Art through these curiously complicated influences, all this unites itself into a multifarious, yet so harmonious Whole; as into a clear, poetic mirror, where man's life and business in this age, his passions and purposes, the highest equally with the lowest, are imaged back to us in beautiful significance. Poetry and Prose are no longer at variance; for the poet's eyes are opened: he sees the changes of many-coloured existence, and sees the loveliness and deep purport which lies hidden under the very meanest of them; hidden to the vulgar sight, but clear to the poets; because the "open secret" is no longer a secret to him, and he knows that the Universe is *full* of goodness; that whatever has being has beauty.



Apart from its literary merits or demerits, such is the temper of mind we trace in Goethe's *Meister*, and, more or less expressively exhibited, in all his later works. We reckon it a rare phenomenon, this temper; and worthy, in our times, if it do exist, of best study from all inquiring men. How has such a temper been attained in this so lofty and impetuous mind, once too, dark, desolate and full of doubt, more than any other? How may we, each of us in his several sphere, attain it, or strengthen it, for ourselves? These are questions, this last is a question, in which no one is unconcerned.

To answer these questions, to begin the answer of them, would lead us very far beyond our present limits. It is not, as we believe, without long, sedulous study, without learning much and unlearning much, that, for any man, the answer of such questions is even to be hoped. Meanwhile, as regards Goethe, there is one feature of the business which, to us, throws considerable light on his moral persuasions, and will not, in investigating the secret of them, be overlooked. We allude to the spirit in which he cultivates his Art; the noble, disinterested, almost religious love with which he looks on Art in general, and strives towards it as towards the sure, highest, nay only good. We extract one passage from *Wilhelm Meister*: it may pass for a piece of fine declamation, but not in that light do we offer it here. Strange, unaccountable as the thing may seem, we have actually evidence before our mind that Goethe believes in such

doctrines, nay has in some sort lived and endeavoured to direct his conduct by them.

“Look at men,” continues Wilhelm, “how they struggle after happiness and satisfaction! Their wishes, their toil, their gold, are ever hunting restlessly; and after what? After that which the Poet has received from nature; the right enjoyment of the world; the feeling of himself in others; the harmonious conjunction of many things that will seldom go together.

“What is it that keeps men in continual discontent and agitation? It is that they cannot make enjoyment steal away from among their hands, that the wished-for comes too late, and nothing reached and acquired produces on the heart the effect which their longing for it at a distance led them to anticipate. Now fate has exalted the Poet above all this, as if he were a god. He views the conflicting tumult of the passions; sees families and kingdoms raging in aimless commotion; sees those perplexed enigmas of misunderstanding, which often a single syllable would explain, occasioning convulsions unutterably baleful. He has a fellow-feeling of the mournful and the joyful in the fate of all mortals. When the man of the world is devoting his days to wasting melancholy for some deep disappointment; or, in the ebullience of joy, is going out to meet his happy destiny, the lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit of the Poet steps forth, like the sun from night to day, and with soft transition tunes his harp to joy or woe. From his heart, its native soil, springs the fair flower of Wisdom; and if others while waking dream, and are pained with fantastic delusions from their every sense, he passes the dream of life like one awake, and the strangest event is to him nothing, save a

part of the past and of the future. And thus the Poet is a teacher, a prophet, a friend of gods and men. How! Thou wouldst have him descend from his height to some paltry occupation? He who is fashioned, like a bird, to hover round the world, to nestle on the lofty summits, to feed on flowers and fruits, exchanging gaily one bough for another, he ought also to work at the plough like an ox; like a dog to train himself to the harness and draught; or perhaps, tied up in a chain, to guard a farm-yard by his barking?

“Werner, it may well be supposed, had listened with the greatest surprise. ‘All true,’ he rejoined, ‘if men were but made like birds; and, though they neither span nor weaved, could spend peaceful days in perpetual enjoyment: if, at the approach of winter, they could as easily betake themselves to distant regions; could retire before scarcity, and fortify themselves against frost.’

“‘Poets have lived so,’ exclaimed Wilhelm, ‘in times when true nobleness was better revered; and so should they ever live. Sufficiently provided for within, they had need of little from without; the gift of imparting lofty emotions, and glorious images to men, in melodies and words that charmed the ear, and fixed themselves inseparably on whatever they might touch, of old enraptured the world, and served the gifted as a rich inheritance. At the courts of kings, at the tables of the great, under the windows of the fair, the sound of them was heard, while the ear and the soul were shut for all beside; and men felt, as we do when delight comes over us, and we pause with rapture if, among the dingles we are crossing, the voice of the nightingale starts out, touching and strong. They found a home in every habitation of the world, and the lowliness of their condition but exalted them the more. The hero listened to their songs, and the Conqueror of the Earth did reverence to a Poet; for he felt that,

without poets, his own wild and vast existence would pass away like a whirlwind, and be forgotten forever. The lover wished that he could feel his longings and his joys so variedly and so harmoniously as the Poet's inspired lips had skill to show them forth; and even the rich man could not of himself discern such costliness in his idle grandeur, as when they were presented to him shining in the splendour of the Poet's spirit, sensible to all worth, and ennobling all. Nay, if thou wilt have it, who but the Poet was it that first formed Gods for us; that exalted us to them, and brought them down to us?"

For a man of Goethe's talent to write many such pieces of rhetoric, setting forth the dignity of poets, and their innate independence on external circumstances, could be no very hard task; accordingly, we find such sentiments again and again expressed, sometimes with still more gracefulness, still clearer emphasis, in his various writings. But to adopt these sentiments into his sober practical persuasion; in any measure to feel and believe that such was still, and must always be, the high vocation of the poet; on this ground of universal humanity, of ancient and now almost forgotten nobleness, to take his stand, even in these trivial, jeering, withered, unbelieving days; and through all their complex, dispiriting, mean, yet tumultuous influences, to "make his light shine before men", that it might beautifully even our "rag-gathering age" with some beams of that mild, divine splendour, which had long left us, the very possibility of which was denied: heartily

and in earnest to meditate all this, was no common proceeding; to bring it into practice, especially in such a life as his has been, was among the highest and hardest enterprises which any man whatever could engage in. We reckon this a greater novelty, than all the novelties which as a mere writer he ever put forth, whether for praise or censure. We have taken it upon us to say that if such *is*, in any sense, the state of the case with regard to Goethe, he deserves not mere approval as a pleasing poet and sweet singer; but deep, grateful study, observance, imitation, as a Moralist and Philosopher. If there be any *probability* that such is the state of the case, we cannot but reckon it a matter well worthy of being inquired into. And it is for this only that we are here pleading and arguing.

On the literary merit and meaning of *Wilhelm Meister* we have already said that we must not enter at present. The book has been translated into English: it underwent the usual judgment from our Reviews and Magazines; was to some a stone of stumbling, to others foolishness, to most an object of wonder. On the whole, it passed smoothly through the critical Assaying-house; for the Assayers have Christian dispositions, and very little time; so *Meister* was ranked, without umbrage, among the legal coin of the Minerva Press; and allowed to circulate as copper currency among the rest. That in so quick a process, a German *Friedrich d'or* might not slip through unnoticed among new and equally brilliant British brass

Farthings, there is no warranting. For our critics can now criticise *impromptu*, which, though far the readiest, is nowise the surest plan. *Misericordia* is the mature product of the first genius of our times; and must, one would think, be different, in various respects, from the immature products of geniuses who are far from the first, and whose works spring from the brain in as many weeks as Goethe's cost him years.

Nevertheless, we quarrel with no man's verdict; for Time, which tries all things, will try this also, and bring to light the truth, both as regards criticism and thing criticised; or sink both into final darkness, which likewise will be the truth as regards them. But there is one censure which we must advert to for a moment, so singular does it seem to us. *Misericordia*, it appears, is a "vulgar" work; no "gentleman," we hear in certain circles, could have written it; few real gentlemen, it is insinuated, can like to read it; no real lady, unless possessed of considerable courage, should profess having read it at all. Of Goethe's "gentility" we shall leave all men to speak that have any, even the faintest knowledge of him; and with regard to the gentility of his readers, state only the following fact. Most of us have heard of the late Queen of Prussia, and know whether or not she was genteel enough, and of real ladyhood: nay, if we must prove everything, her character can be read in the *Life of Napoleon*, by Sir Walter Scott, who passes for a judge of those matters. And yet this is what we find written in the *Kunst und Künstler* for 1824:

## GOETHE

“Books too have their past happiness, which no chance can take away :

*Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen ass,  
Wer nicht die kummer-vollen Nächte  
Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,  
Der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte.*

“These heart-broken lines a highly noble-minded, venerated Queen repeated in the cruellest exile, when cast forth to boundless misery. She made herself familiar with the Book in which these words, with many other painful experiences, are communicated, and drew from it a melancholy consolation. This influence, stretching of itself into boundless time, what is there that can obliterate ?”

Here are strange diversities of taste; “national discrepancies” enough, had we time to investigate them! Nevertheless, wishing each party to retain his own special persuasions, so far as they are honest, and adapted to his intellectual position, national or individual, we cannot but believe that there is an inward and essential Truth in Art; a Truth far deeper than the dictates of mere Mode, and which, could we pierce through these dictates, would be true for all nations and all men. To arrive at this Truth, distant from every one at first, approachable by most, attainable by some small number, is the end and aim of all real study of Poetry. For such a purpose, among others, the comparison of English with foreign judgment, on works that will bear judging, forms no unprofitable help. Some day, we may translate Friedrich Schlegel’s Essay on *Meister*, by way

of contrast to our English animadversions on that subject. Schlegel's praise, whatever ours might do, rises sufficiently high: neither does he seem, during twenty years, to have repented of what he said; for we observe in the edition of his works, at present publishing, he repeats the whole *Character*, and even appends to it, in a separate sketch, some new assurances and elucidations.

It may deserve to be mentioned here that *Meister*, at its first appearance in Germany, was received very much as it has been in England. Goethe's known character, indeed, precluded indifference there; but otherwise it was much the same. The whole guild of criticism was thrown into perplexity, into sorrow; everywhere was dissatisfaction open or concealed. Official duty impelling them to speak, some said one thing, some said another; all felt in secret that they knew not what to say. Till the appearance of Schlegel's *Character*, no word, that we have seen, of the smallest chance to be decisive, or indeed to last beyond the day, had been uttered regarding it. Some regretted that the fire of *Meister* was so wonderfully abated; whisperings there might be about "lowness", "heaviness"; some spake forth boldly in behalf of suffering "virtue". Novalis was not among the speakers, but he censured the work in secret, and this for a reason which to us will seem the strangest; for its being, as we should say, a Benthamite work! Many are the bitter aphorisms we find, among his Fragments, directed against *Meister* for its prosaic, mechanical-



cal, economical, coldhearted, altogether Utilitarian character. We English again call Goethe a mystic: so difficult is it to please all parties! But the good, deep, noble Novalis made the fairest amends; for notwithstanding all this, Tieck tells us, if we remember rightly, he continually returned to *Meister*, and could not but peruse and reperuse it.

On a somewhat different ground proceeded quite another sort of assault from one Pustkucher of Quedlinburg. Herr Pustkucher felt afflicted, it would seem, at the want of Patriotism and Religion too manifest in *Meister*; and determined to take what vengeance he could. By way of sequel to the *Apprenticeship*, Goethe had announced his *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, as in a state of preparation; but the book still lingered: whereupon, in the interim, forth comes this Pustkucher with a *Pseudo-Wanderjahre* of his own; satirising, according to ability, the spirit and principles of the *Apprenticeship*. We have seen an epigram on Pustkucher and his *Wanderjahre*, attributed, with what justice we know not, to Goethe himself: whether it is his or not, it is written in his name; and seems to express accurately enough for such a purpose the relation between the parties,—in language which we had rather not translate:

*Will denn von Quedlinburg aus  
Ein neuer Wanderer traben?  
Hat doch die Wallfisch seine Laus,  
Muss auch die meine haben.*

So much for Pustkucher, and the rest. The

true *Wanderyahre* has at length appeared: the first volume has been before the world since 1821. This Fragment, for it still continues such, is in our view one of the most perfect pieces of composition that Goethe has ever produced. We have heard something of his being at present engaged extending or completing it: what the whole may in his hands become, we are anxious to see; but the *Wanderyahre*, even in its actual state, can hardly be called unfinished, as a piece of writing; it coheres so beautifully within itself; and yet we see not whence the wondrous landscape came, or whither it is stretching; but it hangs before us as a fairy region, hiding its borders on this side in light sunny clouds, fading away on that into the infinite azure: already, we might almost say, it gives us the notion of a *completed fragment*, or the state in which a fragment, not meant for completion, might be left.

But apart from its environment, and considered merely in itself, this *Wanderyahre* seems to us a most estimable work. There is, in truth, a singular gracefulness in it; a high, melodious Wisdom; so light is it, yet so earnest; so calm, so gay, yet so strong and deep: for the purest spirit of all Art rests over it and breathes through it; "mild Wisdom is wedded in living union to Harmony divine"; the Thought of the Sage is melted, we might say, and incorporated in the liquid music of the Poet. "It is called a 'Romance,'" observes the English Translator; "but it treats not of romance characters or subjects; it has less relation to Fielding's

Tom Jones, than to Spenser's *Faëry Queen*." We have not forgotten what is due to Spenser; yet, perhaps, beside his immortal allegory this *Wanderjahre* may, in fact, not unfairly be named; and with this advantage, that it is an allegory not of the Seventeenth century, but of the Nineteenth; a picture full of expressiveness, of what men are striving for, and ought to strive for, in these actual days. "The scene", we are further told, "is not laid on this firm earth; but in a fair Utopia of Art and Science and free Activity; the figures, light and æriform, come unlooked for, and melt away abruptly, like the pageants of Prospero, in his Enchanted Island." We venture to add, that, like Prospero's Island, this too is drawn from the inward depths, the purest sphere of poetic inspiration: ever, as we read it, the images of old Italian Art flit before us; the gay tints of Titian; the quaint grace of Domenichino; sometimes the clear yet unfathomable depth of Raffaele; and whatever else we have known or dreamed of in that rich old genial world.

As it is Goethe's moral sentiments, and culture as a man, that we have made our chief object in this survey, we would fain give some adequate specimen of the *Wanderjahre*, where, as appears to us, these are to be traced in their last degree of clearness and completeness. But to do this, to find a specimen that should be adequate, were difficult, or rather impossible. How shall we divide what is in itself one and indivisible? How shall the fraction of a complex picture give us any idea of the so beautiful

whole? Nevertheless, we shall refer our readers to the Tenth and Eleventh Chapters of the *Wanderjahre*; where, in poetic and symbolic style, they will find a sketch of the nature, objects and present ground of Religious Belief, which, if they have ever reflected duly on that matter, will hardly fail to interest them. They will find these chapters, if we mistake not, worthy of deep consideration; for this is the merit of Goethe: his maxims will bear study; nay they require it, and improve by it more and more. They come from the depths of his mind, and are not in their place till they have reached the depths of ours. The wisest man, we believe, may see in them a reflex of his own wisdom: but to him who is still learning, they become as seeds of knowledge; they take root in the mind, and ramify, as we meditate them, into a whole garden of thought. The sketch we mentioned is far too long for being extracted here: however, we give some scattered portions of it, which the reader will accept with fair allowance. As the wild suicidal Night-thoughts of *Werter* formed our first extract, this by way of counterpart may be the last. We must fancy Wilhelm in the "Pedagogic province", proceeding towards the "Chief, or the Three", with intent to place his son under their charge, in that wonderful region, "where he was to see so many singularities".

"Wilhelm had already noticed that in the cut and colour of the young people's clothes a variety

prevailed, which gave the whole tiny population a peculiar aspect: he was about to question his attendant on this point, when a still stranger observation forced itself upon him: all the children, how employed soever, laid down their work, and turned, with singular yet diverse gestures, towards the party riding past them; or rather, as it was easy to infer, towards the Overseer, who was in it. The youngest laid their arms crosswise over their breasts, and looked cheerfully up to the sky; those of middle size held their hands on their backs, and looked smiling on the ground; the eldest stood with a frank and spirited air,—their arms stretched down, they turned their heads to the right, and formed themselves into a line; whereas the others kept separate, each where he chanced to be.

“The riders having stopped and dismounted here, as several children, in their various modes, were standing forth to be inspected by the Overseer, Wilhelm asked the meaning of these gestures; but Felix struck-in and cried gaily: ‘What posture am I to take then?’ ‘Without doubt,’ said the Overseer, ‘the first posture: the arms over the breast, the face earnest and cheerful towards the sky.’ Felix obeyed, but soon cried: ‘This is not much to my taste; I see nothing up there: does it last long? But yes!’ exclaimed he joyfully, ‘yonder are a pair of falcons flying from the west to the east: that is a good sign too?’—‘As thou takest it, as thou behavest,’ said the other: ‘Now mingle among them as they mingle.’ He gave a signal, and the children left their postures, and again betook them to work or sport as before.”

Wilhelm a second time “asks the meaning of these gestures”; but the Overseer is not at liberty to throw much light on the matter; mentions only that they are symbolical, “no-

wise mere grimaces, but have a moral purport, which perhaps the CHIEF or the THREE may farther explain to him". The children themselves, it would seem, only know it in part; "secrecy having many advantages; for when you tell a man at once and straightforward the purpose of any object, he fancies there is nothing in it". By and by, however, having left Felix by the way, and parted with the Overseer, Wilhelm arrives at the abode of the Three "who preside over sacred things", and from whom farther satisfaction is to be looked for.

"Wilhelm had now reached the gate of a wooded vale, surrounded with high walls: on a certain sign, the little door opened, and a man of earnest, imposing look received our Traveller. The latter found himself in a large beautifully umbrageous space, decked with the richest foliage, shaded with trees and bushes of all sorts; while stately walls and magnificent buildings were discerned only in glimpses through this thick natural bosage. A friendly reception from the Three, who by and by appeared, at last turned into a general conversation, the substance of which we now present in an abbreviated shape.

"Since you entrust your son to us," said they, "it is fair that we admit you to a closer view of our procedure. Of what is external you have seen much that does not bear its meaning on its front. What part of this do you wish to have explained?" "Dignified yet singular gestures of salutation I have noticed; the import of which I would gladly learn: with you, doubtless, the exterior has a reference to the interior, and inversely; let me know what this reference is."

“Well-formed healthy children,” replied the Three, “bring much into the world along with them; Nature has given to each whatever he requires for time and duration; to unfold this is our duty; often it unfolds itself better of its own accord. One thing there is, however, which no child brings into the world with him; and yet it is on this one thing that all depends for making man in every point a man. If you can discover it yourself, speak it out.” Wilhelm thought a little while, then shook his head.

“The Three, after a suitable pause, exclaimed, ‘Reverence!’ Wilhelm seemed to hesitate. ‘Reverence!’ cried they, a second time. ‘All want it, perhaps yourself.’

“Three kinds of gestures you have seen; and we inculcate a threefold reverence, which when commingled and formed into one whole, attains its full force and effect. The first is Reverence for what is Above us. That posture, the arms crossed over the breast, the look turned joyfully towards heaven; that is what we have enjoined on young children; requiring from them thereby a testimony that there is a God above, who images and reveals himself in parents, teachers, superiors. Then comes the second; Reverence for what is Under us. Those hands folded over the back, and as it were tied together; that down-turned smiling look, announce that we are to regard the earth with attention and cheerfulness: from the bounty of the earth we are nourished; the earth affords unutterable joys; but disproportionate sorrows she also brings us. Should one of our children do himself external hurt, blamably or blamelessly; should others hurt him accidentally or purposely; should dead involuntary matter do him hurt; then let him well consider it; for such dangers will attend him all his days. But from this posture we delay not to free our pupil, the instant we

become convinced that the instruction connected with it has produced sufficient influence on him. Then, on the contrary, we bid him gather courage, and, turning to his comrades, range himself along with them. Now, at last, he stands forth, frank and bold; not selfishly isolated; only in combination with his equals does he front the world. Farther we have nothing to add.

“‘I see a glimpse of it!’ said Wilhelm. ‘Are not the mass of men so marred and stunted, because they take pleasure only in the element of evil-wishing and evil-speaking? Whoever gives himself to this, soon comes to be indifferent towards God, contemptuous towards the world, spiteful towards his equals; and the true, genuine, indispensable sentiment of self-estimation corrupts into self-conceit and presumption. Allow me, however,’ continued he, ‘to state one difficulty. You say that reverence is not natural to man: now has not the reverence or fear of rude people for violent convulsions of nature, or other inexplicable mysteriously foreboding occurrences, been heretofore regarded as the germ out of which a higher feeling, a purer sentiment, was by degrees to be developed?’ ‘‘Nature is indeed adequate to fear,’ replied they, ‘but to reverence not adequate. Men fear a known or unknown powerful being; the strong seeks to conquer it, the weak to avoid it; both endeavour to get quit of it, and feel themselves happy when for a short season they have put it aside, and their nature has in some degree restored itself to freedom and independence. The natural man repeats this operation millions of times in the course of his life; from fear he struggles to freedom; from freedom he is driven back to fear, and so makes no advancement. To fear is easy, but grievous; to reverence is difficult, but satisfactory. Man does not willingly submit himself to reverence, or rather he never so submits himself: it is a higher



sense which must be communicated to his nature; which only in some favoured individuals unfolds itself spontaneously, who on this account too have of old been looked upon as Saints and Gods. Here lies the worth, here lies the business of all true Religions, whereof there are likewise only three, according to the objects towards which they direct our devotion.'

"The men paused; Wilhelm reflected for a time in silence; but feeling in himself no pretension to unfold these strange words, he requested the Sages to proceed with their exposition. They immediately complied. 'No Religion that grounds itself on fear,' said they, 'is regarded among us. With the reverence to which a man should give dominion in his mind, he can, in paying honour, keep his own honour; he is not disunited with himself as in the former case. The Religion which depends on Reverence for what is Above us, we denominate the Ethnic; it is the Religion of the Nations, and the first happy deliverance from a degrading fear: all Heathen religions, as we call them, are of this sort, whatsoever names they may bear. The Second Religion, which founds itself on Reverence for what is Around us, we denominate the Philosophical; for the Philosopher stations himself in the middle, and must draw down to him all that is higher, and up to him all that is lower, and only in this medium condition does he merit the title of Wise. Here as he surveys with clear sight his relation to his equals, and therefore to the whole human race, his relation likewise to all other earthly circumstances and arrangements necessary or accidental, he alone, in a cosmic sense, lives in Truth. But now we have to speak of the Third Religion, grounded on Reverence for what is Under us: this we name the Christian; as in the Christian Religion such a temper is the most distinctly manifested: it is a

last step to which mankind were fitted and destined to attain. But what a task was it, not only to be patient with the Earth, and let it lie beneath us, we appealing to a higher birthplace; but also to recognise humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and wretchedness, suffering and death, to recognise these things as divine; nay, even on sin and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honour and love them as furtherances, of what is holy. Of this, indeed, we find some traces in all ages: but the trace is not the goal; and this being now attained, the human species cannot retrograde; and we may say that the Christian Religion, having once appeared, cannot again vanish; having once assumed its divine shape, can be subject to no dissolution.

“To which of these Religions do you specially adhere?” inquired Wilhelm.

“To all the three,” replied they, “for in their union they produce what may properly be called the true Religion. Out of those three Reverences springs the highest Reverence, Reverence for One-self, and these again unfold themselves from this; so that man attains the highest elevation of which he is capable, that of being justified in reckoning himself the Best that God and Nature have produced; nay, of being able to continue on this lofty eminence, without being again by self-conceit and presumption drawn down from it into the vulgar level.”

The Three undertake to admit him into the interior of their Sanctuary; whither, accordingly, he, “at the hand of the Eldest,” proceeds on the morrow. Sorry are we that we cannot follow them into the “octagonal hall”, so full of paintings, and the “gallery

open on one side, and stretching round a spacious, gay, flowery garden". It is a beautiful figurative representation, by pictures and symbols of Art, of the First and Second Religions, the Ethnic and the Philosophical; for the former of which the pictures have been composed from the Old Testament; for the latter from the New. We can only make room for some small portions.

"‘I observe,’ said Wilhelm, ‘you have done the Israelites the honour to select their history as the groundwork of this delineation, or rather you have made it the leading object there.’

"‘As you see,’ replied the Eldest; ‘for you will remark, that on the socles and friezes we have introduced another series of transactions and occurrences, not so much of a synchronistic as of a symphronistic kind; since, among all nations, we discover records of a similar import, and grounded on the same facts. Thus you perceive here, while, in the main field of the picture, Abraham receives a visit from his gods in the form of fair youths, Apollo among the herdsmen of Admetus is painted above on the frieze. From which we may learn, that the gods, when they appear to men, are commonly unrecognised of them.’

"The friends walked on. Wilhelm, for the most part, met with well-known objects; but they were here exhibited in a livelier, more expressive manner, than he had been used to see them. On some few matters he requested explanation, and at last could not help returning to his former question: ‘Why the Israelitish history had been chosen in preference to all others?’

"The Eldest answered: ‘Among all Heathen

religions, for such also is the Israelitish, this has the most distinguished advantages; of which I shall mention only a few. At the Ethnic judgment-seat; at the judgment-seat of the God of Nations, it is not asked whether this is the best, the most excellent nation; but whether it lasts, whether it has continued. The Israelitish people never was good for much, as its own leaders, judges, rulers, prophets, have a thousand times reproachfully declared; it possesses few virtues, and most of the faults of other nations: but in cohesion, steadfastness, valour, and when all this would not serve, in obstinate toughness, it has no match. It is the most perseverant nation in the world; it is, it was and it will be, to glorify the name of Jehovah through all ages. We have set it up, therefore, as the pattern figure; as the main figure, to which the others only serve as a frame.

"It becomes not me to dispute with you," said Wilhelm, "since you have instruction to impart. Open to me, therefore, the other advantages of this people, or rather of its history, of its religion."

"One chief advantage," said the other, "is its excellent collection of Sacred Books. These stand so happily combined together, that even out of the most diverse elements, the feeling of a whole still rises before us. They are complete enough to satisfy; fragmentary enough to excite; barbarous enough to rouse; tender enough to appease; and for how many other contradicting merits might not these Books, might not this one Book, be praised?"

"Thus wandering on, they had now reached the gloomy and perplexed periods of the History, the destruction of the City and the Temple, the murder, exile, slavery of whole masses of this stiff-necked people. Its subsequent fortunes were delineated in a cunning allegorical way; a real

historical delineation of them would have lain without the limits of true Art.

"At this point, the gallery abruptly terminated in a closed door, and Wilhelm was surprised to see himself already at the end. 'In your historical series,' said he, 'I find a chasm. You have destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem, and dispersed the people; yet you have not introduced the divine Man who taught there shortly before; to whom, shortly before, they would give no ear.'

"'To have done this, as you require it, would have been an error. The life of that divine Man, whom you allude to, stands in no connexion with the general history of the world in his time. It was a private life, his teaching was a teaching for individuals. What has publicly befallen vast masses of people, and the minor parts which compose them, belongs to the general History of the World, to the general Religion of the World; the Religion we have named the First. What inwardly befalls individuals belongs to the Second Religion, the Philosophical: such a Religion was it that Christ taught and practised, so long as he went about on Earth. For this reason, the external here closes, and I now open to you the internal.'

"A door went back, and they entered a similar gallery; where Wilhelm soon recognised a corresponding series of Pictures from the New Testament. They seemed as if by another hand than the first: all was softer; forms, movements, accompaniments, light and colouring."

Into this second gallery, with its strange doctrine about "Miracles and Parables", the characteristic of the Philosophical Religion, we cannot enter for the present, yet must give one hurried glance. Wilhelm expresses some surprise that these delineations terminate

“with the Supper, with the scene where the Master and his Disciples part”. He inquires for the remaining portion of the history.

“In all sorts of instruction,” said the Eldest, “in all sorts of communication, we are fond of separating whatever it is possible to separate; for by this means alone can the notion of importance and peculiar significance arise in the young mind. Actual experience of itself mingles and mixes all things together: here, accordingly, we have entirely disjoined that sublime Man’s life from its termination. In life, he appears as a true Philosopher,—let not the expression stagger you,—as a Wise Man in the highest sense. He stands firm to his point; he goes on his way inflexibly, and while he exalts the lower to himself, while he makes the ignorant, the poor, the sick, partakers of his wisdom, of his riches, of his strength, he, on the other hand, in no wise conceals his divine origin; he dares to equal himself with God, nay to declare that he himself is God. In this manner he is wont, from youth upwards, to astound his familiar friends; of these he gains a part to his own cause; irritates the rest against him; and shows to all men, who are aiming at a certain elevation in doctrine and life, what they have to look for from the world. And thus, for the noble portion of mankind, his walk and conversation are even more instructive and profitable than his death: for to those trials every one is called, to this trial but a few. Now, omitting all that results from this consideration, do but look at the touching scene of the Last Supper. Here the Wise Man, as it ever is, leaves those that are his own, utterly orphaned behind him; and while he is careful for the Good, he feeds along with them a traitor, by whom he and the Better are to be destroyed.”

This seems to us to have "a deep, still meaning"; and the longer and closer we examine it, the more it pleases us. Wilhelm is not admitted into the shrine of the Third Religion, the Christian, or that of which Christ's sufferings and death were the symbol, as his walk and conversation had been the symbol of the Second, or Philosophical Religion. "That last Religion", it is said,—

"That last Religion, which arises from the Reverence of what is Beneath us; that veneration of the contradictory, the hated, the avoided, we give to each of our pupils, in small portions, by way of outfit, along with him into the world, merely that he may know where more is to be had, should such a want spring up within him. I invite you to return hither at the end of a year, to attend our general Festival, and see how far your son is advanced: then shall you be admitted into the Sanctuary of Sorrow."

"Permit me one question," said Wilhelm: "as you have set up the life of this divine Man for a pattern and example, have you likewise selected his sufferings, his death, as a model of exalted patience?"

"Undoubtedly we have," replied the Eldest. "Of this we make no secret; but we draw a veil over those sufferings, even because we reverence them so highly. We hold it a damnable audacity to bring forth that torturing Cross, and the Holy One who suffers on it, or to expose them to the light of the Sun, which hid its face when a reckless world forced such a sight on it; to take these mysterious secrets, in which the divine depth of Sorrow lies hid, and play with them, fondle them, trick them out, and rest not till the most reverend

of all solemnities appears vulgar and palty. Let so much for the present suffice— . . . The rest we must still owe you for a twelvemonth. The instruction, which in the interim we give the children, no stranger is allowed to witness: then, however, come to us, and you will hear what our best Speakers think it serviceable to make public on those matters.”

Could we hope that, in its present disjointed state, this emblematic sketch would rise before the minds of our readers; in any measure as it stood before the mind of the writer; that, in considering it, they might seize only an outline of those many meanings which, at less or greater depth, lie hidden under it, we should anticipate their thanks for having, a first or a second time, brought it before them. As it is, believing that, to open-minded truth-seeking men, the deliberate words of an open-minded truth-seeking man can in no case be wholly unintelligible, nor the words of such a man as Goethe indifferent, we have transcribed it for their perusal. If we induce them to turn to the original, and study this in its completeness, with so much else that environs it, and bears on it, they will thank us still more. To our own judgment at least, there is a fine and pure significance in this whole delineation: such phrases even as “the Sanctuary of Sorrow”, “the divine depth of Sorrow”, have of themselves a pathetic wisdom for us; as indeed a tone of devoutness, of calm, mild, priest-like dignity pervades the whole. In a time like ours, it is rare to see, in the



writings of cultivated men, any opinion whatever bearing any mark of sincerity on such a subject as this: yet it is and continues the highest subject, and they that are highest are most fit for studying it, and helping others to study it.

Goethe's *Wanderjahre* was published in his seventy-second year; *Werter* in his twenty-fifth: thus in passing between these two works, and over *Meinern Lehrsatz*, which stands nearly mid-way, we have glanced over a space of almost fifty years, including within them, of course, whatever was most important in his public or private history. By means of these quotations, so diverse in their tone, we meant to make it visible that a great change had taken place in the moral disposition of the man; a change from outward imprisonment, doubt and discontent, into freedom, belief and clear activity: such a change as, in our opinion, must take place, more or less consciously, in every character that, especially in these times, attains to spiritual manhood; and in characters possessing any thoughtfulness and sensibility, will seldom take place without a too painful consciousness, without bitter conflicts, in which the character itself is too often maimed and impoverished, and which end too often not in victory, but in defeat, or fatal compromise with the enemy. Too often, we may well say; for though many gird on the harness, few bear it warrior-like; still fewer put it off with triumph. Among

our own poets, Byron was almost the only man we saw faithfully and manfully struggling, to the end, in this cause; and he died while the victory was still doubtful, or at best, only beginning to be gained. We have already stated our opinion, that Goethe's success in this matter has been more complete than that of any other man in his age; nay that, in the strictest sense, he may almost be called the only one that has so succeeded. On this ground, were it on no other, we have ventured to say, that his spiritual history and procedure must deserve attention; that his opinions, his creations, his mode of thought, his whole picture of the world as it dwells within him, must to his contemporaries be an inquiry of no common interest; of an interest altogether peculiar, and not in this degree exemplified in existing literature. These things can be but imperfectly stated here, and must be left, not in a state of demonstration, but, at the utmost, of loose fluctuating probability; nevertheless, if inquired into, they will be found, to have a precise enough meaning, and, as we believe, a highly important one.

For the rest, what sort of mind it is that has passed through this change, that has gained this victory; how rich and high a mind; how learned by study in all that is wisest, by experience in all that is most complex, the brightest as well as the blackest, in man's existence; gifted with what insight, with what grace and power of utterance, we shall not for the present attempt discussing. All these

the reader will learn, who studies his writings with such attention as they merit: and by no other means. Of Goethe's dramatic, lyrical, didactic poems, in their thousandfold expressiveness, for they are full of expressiveness, we can here say nothing. But in every department of Literature, of Art ancient and modern, in many provinces of Science, we shall often meet him; and hope to have other occasions of estimating what, in these respects, we and all men owe him.

Two circumstances, meanwhile, we have remarked, which to us throw light on the nature of his original faculty for Poetry, and go far to convince us of the Mastery he has attained in that art: these we may here state briefly, for the judgment of such as already know his writings, or the help of such as are beginning to know them. The first is, his singularly emblematic intellect; his perpetual never-failing tendency to transform into *shape*, into *life*, the opinion, the feeling that may dwell in him; which, in its widest sense, we reckon to be essentially the grand problem of the Poet. We do not mean mere metaphor and rhetorical trope: these are but the exterior concern, often but the scaffolding of the edifice, which is to be built up (within our thoughts) by means of them. In allusions, in similitudes, though no one known to us is happier, many are more copious, than Goethe. But we find this faculty of his in the very essence of his intellect; and trace it alike in the quiet, cunning epigram, the allegory, the quaint device,

reminding us of some Quarles or Bunyan; and in the *Fausts*, the *Tassos*, the *Mignons*, which in their pure and genuine personality, may almost remind us of the *Arbels* and *Hamlets* of Shakspeare. Everything has form, everything has visual existence; the poet's imagination turns them to *shape*. This, as a natural endowment, exists in Goethe, we conceive, to a very high degree.

The other characteristic of his mind, which proves to us his acquired mastery in art, as this shows us the extent of his original capacity for it, is his wonderful variety, nay universality; his entire freedom from Mannerism. We read Goethe for years, before we come to see wherein the distinguishing peculiarity of his understanding, of his disposition, even of his way of writing, consists. It seems quite a simple style that of his; remarkable chiefly for its calmness, its perspicuity, in short its commonness; and yet it is the most uncommon of all styles: we feel as if every one might imitate it, and yet it is inimitable. As hard is it to discover in his writings,—though there also, as in every man's writings, the character of the writer must lie recorded,—what sort of spiritual construction he has, what are his temper, his affections, his individual specialities. For all lives freely within him: Philina and Clärchen, Mephistopheles and Mignon, are alike indifferent, or alike dear to him; he is of no sect or caste: he seems not this man or that man, but a man. We

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reckon this to be the characteristic of a Master in Art of any sort; and true especially of all great Poets. How true is it of Shakspeare and Homer! Who knows, or can figure what the Man Shakspeare was, by the first, by the twentieth, perusal of his works? He is a Voice coming to us from the Land of Melody: his old brick dwelling-place, in the mere earthly burgh of Stratford-on-Avon, offers us the most inexplicable enigma. And what is Homer in the *Ilias*? He is THE witness; he has seen, and he reveals it; we hear and believe, but do not behold him. Now compare, with these two Poets, any other two; not of equal genius, for there are none such, but of equal sincerity, who wrote as earnestly, and from the heart, like them. Take, for instance, Jean Paul and Lord Byron. The good Richter begins to show himself, in his broad, massive, kindly, quaint significance, before we have read many pages of even his slightest work; and to the last, he paints himself much better than his subject. Byron may also be said to have painted nothing else than himself, be his subject what it might. Yet as a test for the culture of a Poet, in his poetical capacity, for his pretensions to mastery and completeness in his art, we cannot but reckon this among the surest. Tried by this, there is no living writer that approaches within many degrees of Goethe.

Thus, it would seem, we consider Goethe to be a richly educated Poet, no less than a richly educated Man; a master both of

Humanity and of Poetry; one to whom Experience has given true wisdom, and the "Melodies Eternal" a perfect utterance for his wisdom. Of the particular form which this humanity, this wisdom has assumed; of his opinions, character, personality,—for these, with whatever difficulty, are and must be decipherable in his writings,—we had much to say: but this also we must decline. In the present state of matters, to speak adequately would be a task too hard for us, and one in which our readers could afford little help, nay in which many of them might take little interest. Meanwhile, we have found a brief cursory sketch on this subject, already written in our language: some parts of it, by way of preparation, we shall here transcribe. It is written by a professed admirer of Goethe; nay, as might almost seem, by a grateful learner, whom he had taught, whom he had helped to lead out of spiritual obstruction, into peace and light. Making due allowance for all this, there is little in the paper that we object to.

"In Goethe's mind," observes he, "the first aspect that strikes us is its calmness, then its beauty; a deeper inspection reveals to us its vastness and unmeasured strength. 'This man rules, and is not ruled. The stern and fiery energies of a most passionate soul lie silent in the centre of his being; a trembling sensibility has been injured to stand, without flinching or murmur, the sharpest trials. Nothing outward, nothing inward, shall agitate or control him. The brightest and most capricious fancy, the most piercing

and inquisitive intellect, the wildest and deepest imagination; the highest thrills of joy, the bitterest pangs of sorrow: all these are his, he is not theirs. While he moves every heart from its steadfastness, his own is firm and still: the words that search into the inmost recesses of our nature, he pronounces with a tone of coldness and equanimity; in the deepest pathos he weeps not, or his tears are like water trickling from a rock of adamant. He is king of himself and of his world; nor does he rule it like a vulgar great man, like a Napoleon or Charles the Twelfth, by the mere brute exertion of his will, grounded on no principle, or on a false one: his faculties and feelings are not fettered or prostrated under the iron sway of Passion, but led and guided in kindly union under the mild sway of Reason; as the fierce primeval elements of Chaos were stilled at the coming of Light, and bound together, under its soft vesture, into a glorious and beneficent Creation.

"This is the true Rest of man; the dim aim of every human soul, the full attainment of only a chosen few. It comes not unsought to any; but the wise are wise because they think no price too high for it. Goethe's inward home has been reared by slow and laborious efforts; but it stands on no hollow or deceitful basis: for his peace is not from blindness, but from clear vision; not from uncertain hope of alteration, but from sure insight into what cannot alter. His world seems once to have been desolate and baleful as that of the darkest sceptic: but he has covered it anew with beauty and solemnity, derived from deeper sources, over which Doubt can have no sway. He has inquired fearlessly, and fearlessly searched out and denied the False; but he has not forgotten, what is equally essential and infinitely harder, to search out and admit the True. His heart is still full of warmth, though his head is clear and cold;

the world for him is still full of grandeur, though he clothes it with no false colours; his fellow-creatures are still objects of reverence and love, though their basenesses are plainer to no eye than to his. To reconcile these contradictions is the task of all good men, each for himself, in his own way and manner; a task which, in our age, is encompassed with difficulties peculiar to the time; and which Goethe seems to have accomplished with a success that few can rival. A mind so in unity with itself, even though it were a poor and small one, would arrest our attention, and win some kind regard from us; but when this mind ranks among the strongest, and most complicated of the species, it becomes a sight full of interest, a study full of deep instruction.

"Such a mind as Goethe's is the fruit not only of a royal endowment by nature, but also of a culture proportionate to her bounty. In Goethe's original form of spirit we discern the highest gifts of manhood, without any deficiency of the lower; he has an eye and a heart equally for the sublime, the common, and the ridiculous; the elements at once of a poet, a thinker, and a wit. Of his culture we have often spoken already; and it deserves again to be held up to praise and imitation. This, as he himself unostentatiously confesses, has been the soul of all his conduct, the great enterprise of his life; and few that understand him will be apt to deny that he has prospered. As a writer, his resources have been accumulated from nearly all the provinces of human intellect and activity; and he has trained himself to use these complicated instruments with a light expertness which we might have admired in the professor of a solitary department. Freedom, and grace, and smiling earnestness are the characteristics of his works: the matter of them flows along in chaste abundance, in the softest combination; and



their style is referred to by native critics as the highest specimen of the German tongue.

“But Goethe’s culture as a writer is perhaps less remarkable than his culture as a man. He has learned not in head only, but also in heart; not from Art and Literature, but also by action and passion, in the rugged school of Experience. If asked what was the grand characteristic of his writings, we should not say knowledge, but wisdom. A mind that has seen, and suffered, and done, speaks to us of what it has tried and conquered. A gay delineation will give us notice of dark and toilsome experiences, of business done in the great deep of the spirit; a maxim, trivial to the careless eye, will rise with light and solution over long perplexed periods of our own history. It is thus that heart speaks to heart, that the life of one man becomes a possession to all. Here is a mind of the most subtle and tumultuous elements; but it is governed in peaceful diligence, and its impetuous and ethereal faculties work softly together for good and noble ends. Goethe may be called a Philosopher; for he loves and has practised as a man the wisdom which, as a poet, he inculcates. Composure and cheerful seriousness seem to breathe over all his character. There is no whining over human woes: it is understood that we must simply all strive to alleviate or remove them. There is no noisy battling for opinions; but a persevering effort to make Truth lovely, and recommend her, by a thousand avenues, to the hearts of all men. Of his personal manners we can easily believe the universal report, as often given in the way of censure as of praise, that he is a man of consummate breeding and the stateliest presence: for an air of polished tolerance, of courtly, we might almost say, majestic repose and serene humanity, is visible throughout his works. In

no line of them does he speak with asperity of any man; scarcely ever even of a thing. He knows the good, and loves it; he knows the bad and hateful, and rejects it; but in neither case with violence: his love is calm and active; his rejection is implied, rather than pronounced; meek and gentle, though we see that it is thorough, and never to be revoked. The noblest and the basest he not only seems to comprehend, but to personate and body forth in their most secret lineaments: hence actions and opinions appear to him as they are, with all the circumstances which extenuate or endear them to the hearts where they originated and are entertained. This also is the spirit of our Shakspeare, and perhaps of every great dramatic poet. Shakspeare is no sectarian; to all he deals with equity and mercy; because he knows all, and his heart is wide enough for all. In his mind the world is a whole; he figures it as Providence governs it; and to him it is not strange that the sun should be caused to shine on the evil and the good, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust."

Considered as a transient far-off view of Goethe in his personal character, all this, from the writer's peculiar point of vision, may have its true grounds, and wears at least the aspect of sincerity. We may also quote something of what follows on Goethe's character as a poet and thinker, and the contrast he exhibits in this respect with another celebrated, and now altogether European author.

"Goethe", observes this Critic, "has been called the 'German Voltaire'; but it is a name which does him wrong and describes him ill. Except in the corresponding variety of their pursuits and

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knowledge, in which, perhaps, it does Voltaire wrong, the two cannot be compared. Goethe is all, or the best of all, that Voltaire was, and he is much that Voltaire did not dream of. To say nothing of his dignified and truthful character as a man, he belongs, as a thinker and a writer, to a far higher class than this *enfant gâté du monde qu'il gâta*. He is not a questioner and a despiser, but a teacher and a reverencer; not a destroyer, but a builder-up; not a wit only, but a wise man. Of him Montesquieu could not have said, with even epigrammatic truth: *Il a plus que personne l'esprit que tout le monde a*. Voltaire is the *cleverest* of all past and present men; but a great man is something more, and this he surely was not."

Whether this epigram, which we have seen in some Biographical Dictionary, really belongs to Montesquieu, we know not; but it does seem to us not wholly inapplicable to Voltaire, and at all events, highly expressive of an important distinction among men of talent generally. In fact, the popular man, and the man of true, at least of great originality, are seldom one and the same; we suspect that, till after a long struggle on the part of the latter, they are never so. Reasons are obvious enough. The popular man stands on our own level, or a hairsbreadth higher; he shows us a truth which we can see without shifting our present intellectual position. This is a highly convenient arrangement. The original man, again, stands above us; he wishes to wrench us from our old fixtures, and elevate us to a higher and clearer level: but to quit our old fixtures, especially if we have sat in

them with moderate comfort for some score or two of years, is no such easy business; accordingly we demur, we resist, we even give battle; we still suspect that he is above us, but try to persuade ourselves (Laziness and Vanity earnestly assenting) that he is below. For is it not the very essence of such a man that he be *new*? And who will warrant us that, at the same time, he shall only be an intensation and continuation of the *old*, which, in general, is what we long and look for? No one can warrant us. And, granting him to be a man of real genius, real depth, and that speaks not till after earnest meditation, what sort of a philosophy were his, could we estimate the length, breadth and thickness of it at a single glance? And when did Criticism give two glances? Criticism, therefore, opens on such a man its greater and its lesser batteries, on every side: he has no security but to go on disregarding it; and "in the end", says Goethe, "Criticism itself comes to relish that method". But now let a speaker of the other class come forward; one of those men that "have more than any one, the opinion which all men have"! No sooner does he speak, than all and sundry of us feel as if we had been wishing to speak that very thing, as if we ourselves might have spoken it; and forthwith resounds from the united universe a celebration of that surprising feat. What clearness, brilliancy, justness, penetration! Who can doubt that this man is right, when so many thousand voices are ready to

back him? Doubtless, he is right; doubtless, he is a clever man; and his praise will long be in all the Magazines.

Clever men are good, but they are not the best. "The instruction they can give us is like baked bread, savoury and satisfying for a single day"; but, unhappily, "flour cannot be sown, and seed-corn ought not to be ground". We proceed with our Critic in his contrast of Goethe with Voltaire.

"As poets," continues he, "the two live not in the same hemisphere, not in the same world. Of Voltaire's poetry, it were blindness to deny the polished, intellectual vigour, the logical symmetry, the flashes that from time to time give it the colour, if not the warmth, of fire: but it is in a far other sense than this that Goethe is a poet; in a sense of which the French literature has never afforded any example. We may venture to say of him, that his province is high and peculiar; higher than any poet but himself, for several generations, has so far succeeded in, perhaps even has steadfastly attempted. In reading Goethe's poetry, it perpetually strikes us that we are reading the poetry of our own day and generation. No demands are made on our credulity; the light, the science, the scepticism of our age, is not hid from us. He does not deal in antiquated mythologies, or ring changes on traditionary poetic forms; there are no supernal, no infernal influences,—for *Faust* is an apparent, rather than a real exception; but there is the barren prose of the nineteenth century, the vulgar life which we are all leading, and it starts into strange beauty in his hands, and we pause in delighted wonder to behold the flowerage of poesy blooming in that parched and rugged soil.

This is the end of his Mignons and Harpers, of his *Hermanns* and *Meisters*. Poetry, as he views it, exists not in time or place, but in the spirit of man; and Art with Nature is now to perform for the poet what Nature alone performed of old. The divinities and demons, the witches, spectres and fairies, are vanished from the world, never again to be recalled; but the Imagination, which created these, still lives, and will forever live, in man's soul; and can again pour its wizard light over the Universe, and summon forth enchantments as lovely or impressive, and which its sister faculties will not contradict. To say that Goethe has accomplished all this, would be to say that his genius is greater than was ever given to any man: for if it was a high and glorious mind, or rather series of minds, that peopled the first ages with their peculiar forms of poetry, it must be a series of minds much higher and more glorious that shall so people the present. The angels and demons that can lay prostrate our hearts in the nineteenth century, must be of another and more cunning fashion than those who subdued us in the ninth. To have attempted, to have begun this enterprise, may be accounted the greatest praise. That Goethe ever meditated it, in the form here set forth, we have no direct evidence: but, indeed, such is the end and aim of high poetry at all times and seasons; for the fiction of the poet is not falsehood, but the purest truth; and, if he would lead captive our whole being, not rest satisfied with a part of it, he must address us on interests that *are*, not that *were* ours; and in a dialect which finds a response, and not a contradiction, within our bosoms."

Here, however, we must terminate our pillerings, or open robberies, and bring these

strange impositions to a class. In the extracts we have given, in the remarks made on them and on the subject of them, we are aware that we have held the attitude of admirers and pleaders; neither is it unknown to us that the critic is, in virtue of his office, a judge, and not an advocate; still there, not to do justice, but to improve justice, which in most cases will involve blame as well as praise. But we are firm believers in the maxim that, for all right judgment of any man or thing, it is useful, nay essential, to see his good qualities before pronouncing on his bad. This maxim is so clear to our eyes, that, in respect to poetry at least, we almost think we could make it clear to other men. In the first place, at all events, it is a much shallower and more ignoble occupation to detect faults than to discover beauties. The "critic fly", if it do but alight on any plinth or single cornice of a brave stately building, shall be able to declare, with its half-inch vision, that here is a speck, and there an inequality; that, in fact, this and the other individual stone are nowise as they should be; for all this the "critic fly" will be sufficient: but to take in the fair relations of the Whole, to see the building as one object, to estimate its purpose, the adjustment of its parts, and their harmonious coöperation towards that purpose, will require the eye and the mind of a Vitruvius, or a Palladio. But farther, the faults of a poem, or other piece of art, as we view them at first, will by no means

continue unaltered when we view them after due and final investigation. Let us consider what we mean by a fault. By the word fault, we designate something that displeases us, that contradicts us. But here the question might arise: Who are *we*? This fault displeases, contradicts *us*; so far is clear; and had *we*, had *I*, and *my* pleasure and confirmation, been the chief end of the poet, then doubtless he has failed in that end, and his fault remains a fault irremediably, and without defence. But who shall say whether such really was his object, whether such ought to have been his object? And if it was not, and ought not to have been, what becomes of the fault? It must hang altogether undecided; we as yet know nothing of it; perhaps it may not be the poet's, but our own fault; perhaps it may be no fault whatever. To see rightly into this matter, to determine with any infallibility, whether what we call a fault is in very deed a fault, we must previously have settled two points, neither of which may be so readily settled. First, we must have made plain to ourselves what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his own eye, and how far, with such means as it afforded him, he has fulfilled it. Secondly, we must have decided whether and how far this aim, this task of his, accorded,—not with *us*, and our individual crochets, and the crochets of our little senate where we give or take the law,—but with human nature, and the



nature of things at large; with the universal principles of poetic beauty, not as they stand written in our text-books, but in the hearts and imaginations of all men. Does the answer in either case come out unfavourable; was there an inconsistency between the means and the end, a discordance between the end and truth, there is a fault: was there not, there is no fault.

Thus it would appear that the detection of faults, provided they be faults of any depth and consequence, leads us of itself into that region where also the higher beauties of the piece, if it have any true beauties, essentially reside. In fact, according to our view, no man can pronounce dogmatically, with even a chance of being right, on the faults of a poem, till he has seen its very last and highest beauty; the last in becoming visible to any one, which few ever look after, which indeed in most pieces it were very vain to look after; the beauty of the poem as a Whole, in the strict sense; the clear view of it as an indivisible Unity; and whether it has grown up naturally from the general soil of Thought, and stands there like a thousand-years Oak, no leaf, no bough superfluous; or is nothing but a pasteboard Tree, cobbled together out of size and waste-paper and water-colours altogether unconnected with the soil of Thought, except by mere juxtaposition, at best united with it by some decayed boughs and *dead boughs*, which the more Decorationist (as in your History)



the reader to believe, on our word, that we do not reckon them unanswerable, nay that we reckon them in general the most answerable things in the world; and things which even a little increase of knowledge will not fail to answer without other help.

For furthering such increase of knowledge on this matter, may we beg the reader to accept two small pieces of advice; which we ourselves have found to be of use in studying Goethe. They seem applicable to the study of Foreign Literature generally; indeed to the study of all Literature that deserves the name.

The first is, nowise to suppose that Poetry is a superficial, cursory business, which may be seen through to the very bottom, so soon as one inclines to cast his eye on it. We reckon it the falsest of all maxims that a true Poem can be adequately *tasted*; can be judged of "as men judge of a dinner", by some internal *tongue*, that shall decide on the matter at once and irrevocably. Of the poetry which supplies spouting-clubs, and circulates in circulating libraries, we speak not here. That is quite another species; which has circulated, and will circulate, and ought to circulate, in all times; but for the study of which no man is required to give rules, the rules being already given by the thing itself. We speak of that Poetry which Masters write, which aims not at "furnishing a languid mind with fantastic shows and indolent emotions", but at incorporating the everlasting Reason of man in forms visible to his Sense, and suitable to it: and of this we

say, that to know it is no slight task; but rather that, being the essence of all science, it requires the purest of all study for knowing it. "What!" cries the reader, "are we to *study* Poetry?" To pore over it as we do over Fluxions?" Reader, it depends upon your object: if you want only *amusement*, choose your book, and you get along, without study, excellently well. "But is not Shakespeare plain, visible to the very bottom, without study?" cries he. Alas, no, gentle Reader; we cannot think so; we do not find that he is visible to the very bottom even to those that profess the study of him. It has been our lot to read some criticisms on Shakespeare, and to hear a great many; but for most part they amounted to no such "visibility". Volumes we have seen that were simply one huge Interjection printed over three hundred pages. Nine-tenths of our critics have told us little more of Shakespeare, than what honest Franz Horn says our neighbours used to tell of him, "that he was a great spirit, and slept majestically along". Johnson's Preface, a sound and solid piece for its purpose, is a complete exception to this rule; and, so far as we remember, the only complete one. Students of poetry admire Shakespeare in their tenth year; but go on admiring him more and more, understanding him more and more, till their three-score-and-ten. Grotius said, he read Terence otherwise than boys do. "Happy consequence of youth," adds Goethe, "nay, of men in general; that at all moments of their existence they can look upon themselves as

complete; and inquire neither after the True nor the False, nor the High nor the Deep, but simply after what is proportioned to themselves."

Our second advice we shall state in few words. It is, to remember that a Foreigner is no Englishman; that in judging a foreign work, it is not enough to ask whether it is suitable to our *mores*, but whether it is suitable to foreign *mores*; above all, whether it is suitable to *itself*. The fairness, the necessity of this can need no demonstration; yet how often do we find it, in practice, altogether neglected! We could fancy we saw some Bond-street Tailor criticising the costume of an ancient Greek; censuring the highly improper cut of collar and lappel; lamenting, indeed, that collar and lappel were nowhere to be seen. He pronounces the costume, easily and decisively, to be a barbarous one: to know whether it *is* a barbarous one, and how barbarous, the judgment of a Winkelmann might be required, and he would find it hard to give a judgment. For the questions set before the two were radically different. The Fraction asked himself: How will this look in Almacks, and before Lord Mahogany? The Winkelmann asked himself: How will this look in the Universe, and before the Creator of Man?

Whether these remarks of ours may do anything to forward a right appreciation of Goethe in this country, we know not; neither do we reckon this last result to be of any vital importance. Yet must we believe that, in recom-

mending Goethe, we are doing our part to recommend a truer study of Poetry itself; and happy were we to fancy that any efforts of ours could promote such an object. Promoted, attained it will be, as we believe, by one means and another. A deeper feeling for Art is abroad over Europe; a purer, more earnest purpose in the study, in the practice of it. In this influence we too must participate: the time will come when our own ancient noble Literature will be studied and felt, as well as talked of; when Dilettantism will give place to Criticism in respect of it; and vague wonder end in clear knowledge, in sincere reverence, and, what were best of all, in hearty emulation.

# Burns

[1828]

In the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, "ask for bread and receive a stone"; for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand, it is by no means the highest excellence that men are most forward to recognise. The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution. Robert Burns, in the course of Nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected: and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame; the street where he languished in poverty is called by his name; the highest personages in our literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers; and here is the

sixth narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world!

Mr. Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologise for this new attempt on such a subject: but his readers, we believe, will readily acquit him; or, at worst, will censure only the performance of his task, not the choice of it. The character of Burns, indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted; and will probably gain rather than lose in its dimensions, by the distance to which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet; and this is probably true; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's. For it is certain, that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, may perhaps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's, and neighbour of John a Combe's, had snatched an hour or two from the preservation of his game, and written us a *Life of Shakspere*! What dissertations should we not have had,—not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade, and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws; and how the Poacher became a Player; and how Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels, and did not push him to extremities! In like manner, we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honourable



Prince George, George, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dauntless Aristocracy, and all the Square and Bath, equally with the Age of William and the New and Old Light Clergy, whom he had to do with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the Past, or visible only by light borrowed from his juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for his country and the world. It will be difficult, we say; but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

His former biographers have done something, no doubt, but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. Currie and Mr. Walker, the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: Their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the poet truly; more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronising, apologetic air; as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar and gentleman, should do such honour to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what

he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait; but gauging the length and breadth of the several features, and josting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay, it is not so much as this; for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged.

Mr. Lockhart, we are happy to say, has avoided both these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be: and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, than, I think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography: though, being written on the very popular and condensed scheme of an article for *Constable's Miscellany*, it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power; and contains rather more, and more multifarious, quotations, than belong of right to an original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, so clear, direct and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another

man's. However, the spirit of the work is throughout candid, tolerant and anxiously conciliating; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small; and, as Mr. Morris Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, "the courtesies of polite life are never lost sight of for a moment". But there are better things than these in the volume; and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without difficulty read again.

Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents,—though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh accession,—as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion, that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did coexisting circumstances modify him from without; how did he modify these from within? With what endeavours and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how pro-

duced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography. Few individuals, indeed, can deserve such a study; and many *lives* will be written, and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be written, and read and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with a good-will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended for.

Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the "nine days" have long since elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamour proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be wellnigh shorn of

## BURNS

that great influence, he appears not only as a great British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little. He did more, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very sentiments to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert mine, where no eye but his had guessed its existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for following it. For he found himself in deep solitude, without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain forever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with the pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if it

accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his lynx eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the expansive movement of his own irrepressible soul, he struggles forward into the general view; and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labour, a gift, which Time has now pronounced imperishable. Add to all this, that his darksome, drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindest era of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? Alas, his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapours, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendour, enlightening the world: but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colours, into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on with wonder and tears!

We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is

exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of this; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, "amid the melancholy main", presented to the reflecting mind such a "spectacle of pity and fear", as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in a hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only death opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathising loftiness and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons inspire us in general with any affection; at best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. But a true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the

"*Eternal Melodies*", is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we see in him a freer, purer development of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us; and we mourn his death as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

Such a gift had Nature, in her bounty, bestowed on us in Robert Burns; but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognised it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny,—for so in our ignorance we must speak,—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit, which might have soared could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom; and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The "*Daisy*" falls not unheded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee, covering, timorous beastie", cast forth, after all its provident pains, to "chole the sleety dribble and cranreuch cauld". The "hoar visage" of Winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in these scenes of solemn desolation; but



the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for "it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind*". A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music! But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him: Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the nobleness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart: and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest. He has a just self-consciousness, which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defence, not for offence; no cold suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The Peasant Poet bears himself, we might say, like a King in exile: he is cast among the low, and feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward

he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the "insolence of condensation" cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms, and, as it were, entracts them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship; unobtrusively, often to the unworthy; and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was "quick to learn"; a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Pleasant show himself among us; "a soul like an Æolian harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody". And this was he for whom the world found no finer business than quarrelling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon talow, and gauging alebarrels! In such toils was that mighty Spirit sorrowfully wasted; and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness: culture, leisure, true effort, nay even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions; poured forth with little premeditation; expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humour of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for, after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they still continue to be read; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where

the English tongue is spoken; are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry, or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognised: his *Sincerity*, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and laboured amidst, that he describes: those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it with such melody and modulation as he can; "in homely rustic jingle"; but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth



much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. Byron, for instance, was no common man: yet if we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his Harolds and Giaours, we would ask, real men; we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their author, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion; no natural or possible mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature? Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humour, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last three score and ten years. To our minds, there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, affected, in every one of these otherwise so powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *simple* work, he ever wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was; and seemed so intent on his subject as, for mo-

ments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay, he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem the simplest of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wilful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In his successes and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral.

Here, however, let us say, it is to the Poetry of Burns that we now allude; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where no special reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavour to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style; but on the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted; a certain high-flown inflated tone; the stilted emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shakspeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast! But even with regard

to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force, and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

But we return to his Poetry. In addition to its Sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing: this displays itself in his choice of subjects; or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is forever seeking in external circumstances the help which



can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeliness: home is not poetical but prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-coloured Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times, or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, "a sermon on the duty of staying at home". Let them be sure that heroic ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That form of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an ancient one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest; not contrasted with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed beyond his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or because he wrote what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, which

is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other men,—they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so,—they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favour, even from the highest.

The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquisitions; its thwarted, ever-renewed endeavours; its unwander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision

has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than if he had, by his own strength, kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of Nature's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance "the elder dramatists", and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told, he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on a confidential footing with the higher classes; because, above all things, he must see the world. As to seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but eyesight to see it with. Without eyesight, indeed, the task might be hard. The blind or the purblind man "travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren". But happily every poet is born *in* the world; and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. The mysterious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not

their turns to his "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit". And observe with what a fierce prompt force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick; and yet the burn of a Retzsch is not more expressive or exact.

Of this last excellence, the plainest and most comprehensive of all, being indeed the root and foundation of *every* sort of talent, poetical or intellectual, we could produce innumerable instances from the writings of Burns. Take these glimpses of a snow-storm from his *Winter Night* (the italics are ours):

When biting Boreas, fell and dour,  
*Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r,*

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And Phœbus gies a short-liv'd glower  
*Far south the list,*  
*Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r*  
*Or whirling drift:*

'Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,  
 Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,  
 While burns wi' *snowy wreaths upchok'd,*  
*Wild-eddying whirl,*  
 Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd,  
 Down headlong hurl.

Are there not "descriptive touches" here? The describer *saw* this thing; the essential feature and true likeness of every circumstance in it; saw, and not with the eye only. "Poor labour locked in sweet sleep"; the dead stillness of man, unconscious, vanquished, yet not unprotected, while such strife of the material elements rages, and seems to reign supreme in loneliness: this is of the heart as well as of the eye!—Look also at his image of a thaw, and prophesied fall of the *Auld Brig*:

When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains  
 Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;  
 When from the hills where springs the brawling  
     Coil,  
 Or stately Lugar's *mossy* fountains *boil*,  
 Or where the Greenock winds his *moorland* course,  
 Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,  
 Arous'd by blust'ring winds and *spotting* thowes,  
*In many a torrent down his snow-broo rows;*  
*While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,*  
*Sweeps dams and mills and brigs a' to the gate;*  
 And from Glenbuck down to the Rottonkey,  
 Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd *tumbling* sea;

Then down ye'll hurt, Deil nor ye never rise!  
And dash the gullie jumps up to the pouring skies.

The last line is in itself a Pousin-picture of that Deluge! "The welkin has, as it were, bent down with its weight; the "gullie jumps" and the "pouring skies" are mingled together; it is a world of rain and ruin. In respect of mere clearness and minute fidelity, the *farmer's* commendation of his *And Mair*, in plough or in cart, may vie with Floner's Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Brian's Chariot. Nor have we forgotten stout *Burn-the-wind* and his brawy customers, inspired by *Scotch Drink*; but it is needless to multiply examples. One other trait of a much finer sort we select from multitudes of such among his *Songs*. It gives, in a single line, to the saddest feeling the saddest environment and local habitation:

*The pale Moon is setting beyond the white wave,  
And Time is setting not me, O;*

Farwell, false friends! false lover, farwell!  
I'll nee mair trouble them nor thee, O.

This clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we see our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in itself, perhaps, a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary powers. Floner surpasses all men in this quality: but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are

Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity; their descriptions are detailed, ample and lovingly exact; Homer's fire bursts through, from time to time, as if by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his; words more memorable, now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigour and laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. We hear of "a gentleman that derived his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God". Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward "*red-wat-shod*": in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art!

In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigour of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, and in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise: "All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and

impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities." But this, if we mistake not, is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunelessness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjointed from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts that exist in the Poet, are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the Poet speak to men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *No-sum Organum*. What Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: it had to dwell among the humblest objects; never saw Philosophy; never rose, except by natural effort and for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication, if no proof sufficient, remains for us in his works: we discern the



brawny movements of a gigantic though untutored strength; and can understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate and the forum is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay, perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and "the highest", it has been said, "cannot be expressed in words". We are not without tokens of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr. Stewart, it will be remembered, "wonders", in the passage above quoted, that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the "doctrine of association". We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him. Here for instance:

"We know nothing," thus writes he, "or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the fox-

glove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident, or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, and man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of woe! or wo beyond death and the grave."

Force and fineness of understanding are often spoken of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language so require it; but in truth these qualities are not distinct and independent: except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go together. A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character; neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other. No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the Poetry of Burns, keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling; that his *light* is not more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper; with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is love towards all Nature that

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inspires him, that opens his eyes to its beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that "Love furthers knowledge": but above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns's fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe, is lovely in his sight: "the hoary hawthorn", the "troop of gray plover", the "solitary curlew", all are dear to him; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that, amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry desolation without him and within him, he thinks of the "ourie cattle" and "silly sheep", and their sufferings in the pitiless storm!

I thought me on the ourie cattle,  
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle  
                                    O' wintry war,  
Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,  
                                    Beneath a scaur.  
Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,  
That in the merry months o' spring  
Delighted me to hear thee sing,  
                                    What comes o' thee?  
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,  
                                    And close thy ee?

The tenant of the mean hut, with its "ragged roof and chinky wall", has a heart to pity even these! This is worth several homilies on Mercy; for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy:

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben;  
O wad ye tak a thought and men!  
Ye aiblins might,—I dinna ken,—  
Still hae a stake;  
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,  
Even for your sake!

"He is the father of curses and lies," said Dr. Stop; "and is cursed and damned already."—"I am sorry for it," quoth my uncle Toby!—A Poet without Love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility.

But has it not been said in contradiction to this principle, that "Indignation makes verses"? It has been so said, and is true enough: but the contradiction is apparent, not real. The Indignation which makes verses is, properly speaking, an inverted Love; the love of some right, some worth, some goodness, belonging to ourselves or others, which has been injured, and which this tempestuous feeling issues forth to defend and avenge. No selfish fury of heart, existing there as a primary feeling, and without its opposite, ever produced much Poetry: otherwise, we suppose, the Tiger were the

most musical of all our choristers. Johnson said, he loved a good hater; by which he must have meant, not so much one that hated violently, as one that hated wisely; hated baseness from love of nobleness. However, in spite of Johnson's paradox, tolerable enough for once in speech, but which need not have been so often adopted in print since then, we rather believe that good men deal sparingly in hatred, either wise or unwise: nay that a "good" hater is still a desideratum in this world. The Devil, at least, who passes for the chief and best of that class, is said to be nowise an amiable character.

Of the verses which Indignation makes, Burns has also given us specimens: and among the best that were ever given. Who will forget his "*Dweller in yon Dungeon dark*"; a piece that might have been chaunted by the Furies of Æschylus? The secrets of the infernal Pit are laid bare; a boundless baleful "darkness visible"; and streaks of hell-fire quivering madly in its black haggard bosom!

Dweller in yon Dungeon dark,  
 Hangman of Creation, mark!  
 Who in widow's weeds appears,  
 Laden with unhonoured years,  
 Noosing with care a bursting purse,  
 Baited with many a deadly curse!

Why should we speak of *Scots who hae set Wallace bled*; since all know of it, from the king to the meanest of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback; in

riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor; in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forebore to speak,—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Burns's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns: but to the external ear, it should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war-ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen.

Another wild stormful Song, that dwells in our ear and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson's Fawcett*. Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself that coöperates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy Northland Cacus, that "lived a life of sturt and strife, and died by treacherie", was not he too one of the Nimrods and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay, was there not a touch of grace given him? A fibre of love and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage heart: for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody, his better soul would soar away above oblivion, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes, and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will; matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and

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the ethereal soul sank not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?

*Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,  
Sae dauntingly gaed he;  
He play'd a spring, and danced it round,  
Below the gallows-tree.*

Under a lighter disguise, the same principle of Love, which we have recognised as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humour. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny moods, a full buoyant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is Drollery rather than Humour: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him; and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse*, or the *Farmer's Mare*, or in his *Elegy on poor Mailie*, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there are traits of a Humour as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar,—the Humour of Burns.

Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many other kindred qualities of Burns's Poetry, much more might be said; but now, with

these poor outlines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part of our subject. To speak of his individual Writings, adequately and with any detail, would lead us far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of Poems: they are rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense; yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical. *Tam o' Shanter* itself, which enjoys so high a favour, does not appear to us, at all decisively, to come under this last category. It is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, much less carried us back, into that dark, earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new-modelling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will forever live, though silent now, or vibrating with far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we say, that he is not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the Tragedy



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of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or many-coloured spectrum painted on ale-vapours, and the farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more "Shakspearean" qualities, as these of *Tam o' Shanter* have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces; nay, we incline to believe, that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well, by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent.

Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly poetical of all his "poems" is one which does not appear in Currie's Edition; but has been often printed before and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars*. The subject truly is among the lowest in Nature; but it only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly compacted; melted together, refined; and poured forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, soft of movement; yet sharp and precise in its details; every face is a portrait: that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that *Son of Mars*, are Scottish, yet ideal; the scene is at once a dream, and the very Ragcastle of "Poosie-Nansie". Farther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a real self-supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem.

The blanket of the Night is drawn asunder for a moment; in full, ruddy, flaming light, these rough tattered demajons are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of Life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when the curtain closes, we prolong the action, without effort; the next day as the last, our *Gaird* and our *Balladmonger* are singing and soldiering; their "brats and callets" are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in new combinations, they will wring from Fate another hour of wassail and good cheer. Apart from the universal sympathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns, a genuine inspiration and no inconsiderable technical talent are manifested here. There is the fidelity, humour, warm life and accurate painting and grouping of some Teniers, for whom hostlers and carousing peasants are not without significance. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only, that it seems to us the most perfect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition, strictly so called. In the *Beggars' Opera*, in the *Beggars' Bush*, as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigour, equals this *Canina*; nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it.

But by far the most finished, complete and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although through a small aperture, his light shines with least obstruction; in its highest beauty, and pure sunny clearness. The

reason may be, that Song is a brief simple species of composition; and requires nothing so much for its perfection, as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. Yet the Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for, indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, we know not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department. True, we have songs enough "by persons of quality"; we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a rhymed speech "in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop", rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from endeavouring to sing; though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul*; not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debateable-land on the outskirts of the Nervous System, most of such madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated. With the Songs of Burns we must not name these things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest in another point of view: in form, as well as in spirit. They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they

actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no songs since the little careless catches, and, as it were, drops of song, which Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his Plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding force and truth of sentiment and inward meaning. The Songs of Burns are not more perfect in the former quality than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or slicest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, "sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear!" If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel in *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut*, to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven*; from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Langsyne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, to the fire-eyed fury of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, he has found a tone

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and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. "Let me make the songs of a people," said he, "and you shall make its laws." Surely, if ever any Poet might have equalled himself with Legislators on this ground, it was Burns. His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.

In another point of view, moreover, we incline to think that Burns's influence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which British, particularly Scottish literature, has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the

English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo*; the thing written bears no mark of place; it is not written so much for English-men, as for men; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for certain Generalisations which philosophy termed men. Goldsmith is an exception: not so Johnson; the scene of his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselas*. But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva, where the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period after Scotland became British, we had no literature: at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourth State of Man*. Then came the schisms in our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic: Theologic ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country; however, it

was only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt at writing English; and ere long, Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our "fervid genius", there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclusively French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh, equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so much morally *lived*, as metaphysically *investigated*. Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay of any human affection whatever. The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, not to say their avowed sensuality and unbelief in

all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable enough. We hope, there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy; that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable Structure of social and moral Life, which Wind has through long ages been building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all this: surely the roots, that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not into briars, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities: the field of their life shows neither briars nor roses; but only a flat, continuous thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the "Doctrine of Rent" to the "Natural History of Religion", are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied that much of this evil is past, or rapidly passing away: our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathising in all our attachments, humours, and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water but in mould, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due



to Burns, or to any other individual, it might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns: "a tide of Scottish prejudice", as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, "had been poured along his veins; and he felt that it would boil there till the flood-gates shut in eternal rest". It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him,—that of Scottish Song; and how eagerly he entered on it, how devotedly he laboured there! In his toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy-valley of his careworn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end:

—A wish (I mind its power),  
 A wish, that to my latest hour  
 Will strongly heave my breast,—  
 That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,  
 Some useful plan or book could make,  
 Or sing a sang at least.  
 The rough bur Thistle spreading wide  
   Amang the bearded bear,  
 I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,  
   And spared the symbol dear.

But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long. Far more interesting than any of his written works, as it appears to us, are his acted ones: the Life he willed, and was fated, to lead among his fellow-men. These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places, that they attain their full measure of significance. And this too, alas, was but a fragment! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched; some columns, porticos, firm masses of building, stand completed; the rest more or less clearly indicated; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his Poems, and justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it must often be accepted for the fulfilment; much more is this the case in regard to his Life, the sum and result of all his endeavours, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay was mistaken, and altogether marred.

Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood, but only youth:

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for, to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character; in his thirty-seventh year, he is still, as it were, in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any clearness regarding himself; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes: glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet cannot consent to make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil report. Another far meaner ambition still cleaves to him; he must dream and struggle about a certain "Rock of Independence"; which, natural and even admirable as it might be, was still but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant ground of his being more completely or less completely supplied with money, than others; of his standing at a higher or at a lower altitude in general estimation than others. For the world still appears to him, as to the young, in borrowed colours: he expects from it what it cannot give to any man; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honour, pecuniary ease. He would be happy,

not actively and in himself, but passively and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labour, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot gird himself up for any worthy well-calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between passionate hope and remorseful disappointment: rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force, he summons or breaks asunder many a barrier; travels, nay advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from his path; and to the last, cannot reach the only true happiness of a man, that of clear decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

We do not say these things in dispraise of Burns; nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favour. This blessing is not given soonest to the best; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to develop it. A complex condition had been assigned him from without; as complex a condition from within: no "pre-established harmony" existed between the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empty soul of Robert Burns; it was not wonderful that the adjustment between them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast and discordant an economy as he had been appointed steward over. Byron was, at his death, but

a year younger than Burns; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated: yet in him too, we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood; but at best, and only a little before his end, the beginning of what seemed such.

By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one is his residence at Irvine, so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate. His father was a man of thoughtful, intense, earnest character, as the best of our peasants are; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and, what is far better and rarer, open-minded for more: a man with a keen insight and devout heart; reverent towards God, friendly therefore at once, and fearless towards all that God has made: in one word, though but a hard-handed peasant, a complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfortunately, he was very poor; had he been even a little richer, almost never so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. Mighty events turn on a straw; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world. Had this William Burns's small seven acres of nursery-ground anywise prospered, the boy Robert had

been sent to school; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some university; come forth not as a rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole course of British Literature,—for it lay in him to have done this! But the nursery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school-system: Burns remained a hard-worked ploughboy, and British literature took its own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not banished from their poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words, *Let us worship God*, are heard there from a “priest-like father”; if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears, these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest affection; every heart in that humble group feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a “little band of brethren”. Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay, to bind it under his feet to make him sport. For a bold, warm, buoyant humour of character has been given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates

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no jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-coloured splendour and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path; and so he walks

——in glory and in joy,  
Behind his plough, upon the mountain side!

We ourselves know, from the best evidence, that up to this date Burns was happy; nay, that he was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world; more so even than he ever afterwards appeared. But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken: for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet, but to yield to them, and even serve for a term in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all

events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's-service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world; that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free. Surely, such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite! Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.



It seems to us another circumstance of fatal import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved in the religious quarrels of his district; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood, in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables of these free-minded clergy, he learned much more than was needful for him. Such liberal ridicule of fanaticism awakened in his mind scruples about Religion itself; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurors than these men to exorcise. We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts, at some period of his history; or even that he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed: but it seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by "passions raging like demons" from within, he had little need of sceptical misgivings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence; his mind is at variance with itself; the old divinity no longer presides there; but wild Desires and wild Repentance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he has committed himself before the world; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men; and his only refuge consists in trying to disbelieve his guilt-

ness, and is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by red lightnings of remorse: The whole fabric of his life is blasted asunder; for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost; men and Fortune are leagued for his hurt; "hungry Ruin has him in the wind". He sees no escape but the saddest of all: exile from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the "gloomy night is gathering fast", in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he sings his wild farewell to Scotland:

Farewell my friends, farewell my foes!  
 My peace with these, my love with those:  
 The bursting tears my heart declare;  
 Adieu, my native banks of Ayr!

Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh; hastens thither with anticipating heart; is welcomed as in a triumph, and with universal blandishment and acclamation; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honour, sympathy, affection. Burns's appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature; almost like the appearance of some Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as "a mockery king", set there by

favour, transiently and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak head: but he stands there on his own basis; cool, unastonished, holding his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr. Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point:

“It needs no effort of imagination”, says he, “to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been, in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction, that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation, he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble,—nay, to tremble visibly,—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and

last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves."

The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us: details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect Mr. Walker's personal interviews with Burns as among the best passages of his Narrative: a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's, slight though it is, will also be precious:

"As for Burns," writes Sir Walter, "I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him: but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner; but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened.

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The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side,—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath :

‘Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden’s plain,  
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;  
Bent o’er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,  
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,  
Gave the sad presage of his future years,  
The child of misery baptised in tears’.

“Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne’s called by the unpromising title of ‘The Justice of Peace’. I whispered my information to a friend present; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

“His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one’s knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth’s picture: but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i.e.* none of your modern agriculturists who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gude man* who held his own plough. There was a strong

expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh: but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited; and also that, having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

"This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak in *malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the

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pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this.—I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favour; the calm, unaffected, manly manner in which he not only bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigour and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affectation, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not a moment perplexed; so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray. Nevertheless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge of men's affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him; but a sharper feeling of Fortune's unequal arrangements in their social destiny it also left with him. He had seen the gay and gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are born to play their parts; nay had himself stood in the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment,

and his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly willed this; it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he had not power to choose the one, and reject the other; but must halt forever between two opinions, two objects; making hampered advancement towards either. But so is it with many men: we "long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price"; and so stand chattering with Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the night come, and our fair is over!

The Edinburgh Learned of that period were in general more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart: with the exception of the good old Blacklock, whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as a highly curious *thing*. By the great also he is treated in the customary fashion; entertained at their tables and dismissed: certain modica of pudding and praise are, from time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer; in fame and the show of happiness, infinitely richer; but in the



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substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay poorer; for his heart is now maddened still more with the fever of worldly Ambition; and through long years the disease will rack him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

What Burns was next to do or to avoid; how a man so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might at this point of time have been a question for the wisest. It was a question too, which apparently he was left altogether to answer for himself: of his learned or rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say, that his Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; that we should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Certain of his admirers have felt scandalised at his ever resolving to *gauge*; and would have had him lie at the pool, till the spirit of Patronage stirred the waters, that so, with one friendly plunge, all his sorrows might be healed. Unwise counsellors! They know not the manner of this spirit; and how, in the lap of most golden dreams, a man might have happiness, were it not that in the interim he must die of hunger! It reflects credit on the manliness and sound sense of Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But

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even these possibilities were not rejected in his scheme: he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest, he "did not intend to borrow honour from any profession". We reckon that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe, from any vice inherent in itself. Nay, after all, it was no failure of external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man anything.

Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munificent from a man whose income had lately been seven pounds a year, was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was the treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure. A friendly observer might have hoped serene days for him: his mind is on the true road to peace with itself: what clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds; for the best teacher of duties, that still lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see, and have at hand. Had the "patrons of genius", who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more! The wounds of his heart would have healed, vulgar ambition would have died away. Toil

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and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them; and Poetry would have shone through them as of old: and in her clear ethereal light, which was his own by birthright, he might have looked down on his earthly destiny, and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

But the patrons of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists, all manner of fashionable dangles after literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial Mæcenases, hovered round him in his retreat; and his good as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over him. He was flattered by their notice; and his warm social nature made it impossible for him to shake them off, and hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that they meant him any ill; they only meant themselves a little good; if he suffered harm, let *him* look to it! But they wasted his precious time and his precious talent; they disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their pampering was baneful to him; their cruelty, which soon followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their neighbourhood; and Burns had no retreat but to the "Rock of Independence", which is but an air-castle, after all, that looks well at a distance, but will screen no one from real wind and wet. Flushed with irregular excitement, exasperated alternately, by con-

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tempt of others, and contempt of himself, Burns was no longer regaining his peace of mind, but fast losing it forever. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not now approve what he was doing.

Amid the vapours of unwise enjoyment, of bootless remorse, and angry discontent with Fate, his true loadstar, a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a sea, where without some such loadstar there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident this, which hastened, but did not originate, his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors; is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel: and shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance,—in fits of wild false joy when such offered, and of black despondency when they passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands accused of, and they that are *not* without sin cast the first stone at him! For

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is he not a well-wisher of the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little to credit them. Nay, his convivial Mercenars themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person, no longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful class, stationed, in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breastwork of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierness, had actually branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut him!* We find one passage in this Work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not

"A gentleman of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has often told me that he was seldom more grieved, than when riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dismounted, and joined Burns, who on his proposing to cross the street said: 'Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now'; and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizel Baillie's pathetic ballad:

' His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,  
 His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;  
 But now he lets it wear ony way it will hing,  
 And casts himsell dowie upon the corn-bing.

' O were we young, as we ance hae been,  
 We sud hae been galloping down on yon green,  
 And linking it over the lily-white lea!  
*And warena my heart light, I wad die!*

It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived."

Alas! when we think that Burns now sleeps "where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart", and that most of those fair dames and frizzled gentlemen already lie at his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down,—who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother!

It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; and all

men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! "If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled!" Some brief pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this employment; and how too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labour itself brought him. For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement: and here, in his destitution and degradation, was one act of seeming nobleness and self-devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt too, that with all the "thoughtless follies" that had "laid him low", the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a-day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain! The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts for ever.

We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; for matters had now taken such a shape

with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We are not medically informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the likelier opinion; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity; madness; or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it: and yet Burns had an iron resolution; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was opened for him: and he passed, not softly, yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail-storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a



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reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to himself and the world. We question whether there is not more tenderness of heart than soundness of judgment in these suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help. Counsel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion, which would have availed him, lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it. As to money again, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men in any rank of society, could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral entireness of one or both. But so stands the fact: Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of kindred or other legal affinity, it is in reality no longer expected, or recognised as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced "Patronage", that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be "twice cursed": cursing him that gives, and

him that takes ! And thus, in regard to outward matters also, it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another ; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such, we say, is the principle of modern Honour ; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns ; but no one was ever prouder : we may question whether, without great precautions, even a pension from Royalty would not have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him. We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns ; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warder from his bosom ; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful ; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial ; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant farther, and for Burns it is granting much,

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that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him : patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted : it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do ; or apparently attempt, or wish to do : so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame ? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men ; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets ; as the English did Shakspeare ; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and his Grandees did Cervantes. Do men gather grapes of thorns ; or shall we cut down our thorns for yielding only a *fence* and haws ? How, indeed, could the "nobility and gentry of his native land" hold out any help to this "Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country" ? Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves ? Had they not their game to preserve ; their borough interests to strengthen ; dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give ? Were their means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate ? Less than adequate in general ; few of them in reality were richer than Burns ; many of them were poorer ; for some-

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times they had to wring their supplies, as with thumbscrews, from the hard hand; and, in their need of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy; which Burns was never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The game they preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little* Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might, are all melted or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as man's merely selfish endeavours are fated to do: and here was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was offered them to do, and light was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the solemn mandate, "Love one another, bear one another's burdens", given to the rich only, but to all men. True, we shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a weary life, we shall still find; and that wretchedness which Fate has rendered *voiceless* and *tuneless* is not the least wretched, but the most.

Still, we do not think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more, rather than with less kindness than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown but small favour to its Teachers:

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hunger and nakedness, perils and reviling, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify it. Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly dungeons; Tasso pines in the cell of a madhouse; Camoens dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so "persecuted they the Prophets", not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

Where then does it lie? We are forced to answer: With himself; it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal malarrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action and duration; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power

of any external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man; nay, if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done again: nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons; for wisdom that differs in this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial in all its forms, no good man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

We have already stated the error of Burns; and mourned over it, rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly; and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, not of a mere hot-blooded, popular Verse-monger, or poetical *Restaurateur*, but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him: and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of scepticism, selfishness and triviality, when true

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Nobleness was little understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful principle of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made it more than usually difficult for him to cast aside, or rightly subordinate; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavouring to reconcile these two; and lost it, as he must lose it, without reconciling them.

Burns was born poor; and born also to continue poor, for he would not endeavour to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all admitted, and considered as finally settled. He was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his own Father had a far sorer battle with ungrateful destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True; Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only real pursuit and vocation; but so much the more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery and much worse evils, it has often been the lot of Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding* sheltering himself in a

Dutch garret. Was Milton rich or at his case when he composed *Paradise Lost*? Not only low, but fallen from a height; not only poor, but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his immortal song, and found fit audience, though few. Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier and in prison? Nay, was not the *Araucana*, which Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any moment from that wild warfare? And what then had these men, which Burns wanted? Two things; both which, it seems to us, are indispensable for such men. They had a true, religious principle of morals; and a single not a double aim in their activity. They were not self-seekers and self-worshippers; but seekers and worshippers of something far better than Self. Not personal enjoyment was their object; but a high, heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom in one or the other form, ever hovered before them; in which cause, they neither shrink from suffering, nor called on the earth to witness it as something wonderful; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent. Thus the "golden calf of Self-love", however curiously carved, was not their Deity; but the Invisible Goodness, which alone is man's reasonable service. This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a



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word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated and made subservient; and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks; but its edge must be sharp and single: if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces and will rend nothing.

Part of this superiority these men owed to their age; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or at least not yet disbelieved in: but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns again it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a mere worldly man; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he longs and strives for. A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this; but an instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no Religion; in the shallow age, where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, "a great Perhaps".

He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His poetry is a stray vagrant

gleam, which will not be extinguished within  
 path, but rises not to be the true light of his  
 or to seem "independent"; but it was necessary  
 for him to be at one with his own heart; to place  
 his life; "to seek within himself highest also in  
 would for ever refuse him". He was born a  
 being, and should have been the celestial element of his  
 poet; poetry was the sequence, which external events  
 mount, whither he had wings given him to  
 matter to him; the pride and his Art, were a small  
 the world lay far beneath his feet; and he  
 and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of  
 affection, with clear recognition, with pity. Nay, we  
 man, with clear recognition, with brotherly  
 question, whether for his culture as a Poet,  
 not absolutely suffering for a season were, in  
 looking back over their lives, have testified to  
 that effect. "I would not for much," says Jean  
 Paul, "that I had been born richer." And yet  
 Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another  
 place, he adds: "The prisoner's allowance is  
 bread", and water; and I had often only the  
 latter". But the gold that is reined in the  
 hottest furnace comes out the purest; or, as he

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himself has expressed it, "the canary-bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage".

A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices; brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an Exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *amuck* against them all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness; but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly "respectability". We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay,

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have we not seen another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honours, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might, like him, have "purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan"; for Satan also is Byron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now,—we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which ere long will fall itself with snow!

Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth; they had a message

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to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this divine behest lay smouldering within them; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipation, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted; yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship, will they live there: they are first adulated, then persecuted; they accomplish little for others; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history,—*twice* told us in our own time! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this: "He, who would write heroic poems, must make his whole life a heroic poem". If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are fit for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger; let him worship and besing the

idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him. If, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity! Byron and Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them; and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favour of the great or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inextinguishable citadel of his own soul; that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favour and furtherance for literature; like the costliest flower-jar enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he cannot be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted! Will a Courser of the Sun work softly in the harness of a Dray-horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands; will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites from door to door?

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay from doubting that he is less

guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay the circle of a ginhorse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the ginhorse, and that of the planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to

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plead for Burns. In pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his Works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!



# Boswell's Life of Johnson

[1832]

Æsop's Fly, sitting on the axle of the chariot, has been much laughed at for exclaiming: What a dust I do raise! Yet which of us, in his way, has not sometimes been guilty of the like? Nay, so foolish are men, they often, standing at ease and as spectators on the highway, will volunteer to exclaim of the Fly (not being tempted to it, as *he* was) exactly to the same purport: What a dust *thou* dost raise! Smallest of mortals, when mounted aloft by circumstances, come to seem great; smallest of phenomena connected with them are treated as important, and must be sedulously scanned, and commented upon with loud emphasis.

That Mr. Croker should undertake to edit *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, was a praiseworthy but no miraculous procedure: neither could the accomplishment of such undertaking be, in an epoch like ours, anywise regarded as an event in Universal History; the right or the wrong accomplishment thereof was, in very truth, one of the most insignificant of things. However, it sat in a great environment, on the axle of a high, fast-rolling, parliamentary chariot; and all the world has exclaimed over

Decency maintained and insisted on: if not Christian heart, yet Orthodoxy, and a cleanly, shovel-hated look,—which, as compared with that Nothing, is something very considerable. Grant too, as no contemptible triumph of this latter spirit, that though the Editor is known as a decided Politician and Party-man, he has carefully subdued all temptations to transgress in that way: except by quite involuntary indications, and rather as it were the pervading temper of the whole, you could not discover on which side of the Political Warfare he is enlisted and fights. This, as we said, is a great triumph of the Decency-principle: for this, and for these other graces and performances, let the Editor have all praise.

Herewith, however, must the praise unfortunately terminate. Diligence, Fidelity, Decency, are good and indispensable: yet, without Faculty, without Light, they will not do the work. Along with that Tombstone-information, perhaps even without much of it, we could have liked to gain some answer, in one way or other, to this wide question: What and how was *English Life* in Johnson's time; wherein has ours grown to differ therefrom? In other words: What things have we to forget, what to fancy and remember, before we, from such distance, can put ourselves in Johnson's place; and so, in the full sense of the term, *understand* him, his sayings and his doings? This was indeed specially the problem

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which a Commentator and Editor had to solve: a complete solution of it should have lain in him, his whole mind should have been filled and prepared with perfect insight into it; then, whether in the way of express Dissertation, of incidental Exposition and Indication, opportunities enough would have occurred of bringing out the same: what was dark in the figure of the Past had thereby been enlightened; Boswell had, not in show and word only, but in very fact, been made *new* again, readable to us who are divided from him, even as he was to those close at hand. Of all which very little has been attempted here; accomplished, we should say, next to nothing, or altogether nothing.

Excuse, no doubt, is in readiness for such omission; and, indeed, for innumerable other failings;—as where, for example, the Editor will punctually explain what is already sun-clear; and then anon, not without frankness, declare frequently enough that “the Editor does not understand”, that “the Editor cannot guess”,—while, for most part, the Reader cannot help both guessing and seeing. Thus, if Johnson say, in one sentence, that “English names should not be used in Latin verses”; and then, in the next sentence, speak blamingly of “Carteret being used as a dactyl”, will the generality of mortals detect any puzzle there? Or again, where poor Boswell writes: “I always remember a remark made to me by a Turkish lady, educated in France: ‘*Ma foi, monsieur, notre bonheur dépend de la façon que notre sang circule*’”;—though the Turkish lady

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here speaks English-French, where is the call for a Note like this: "Mr. Boswell no doubt fancied these words had some meaning, or he would hardly have quoted them: but what that meaning is, the Editor cannot guess"? The Editor is clearly no witch at a riddle.—For these and all kindred deficiencies the excuse, as we said, is at hand; but the fact of their existence is not the less certain and regrettable.

Indeed, it, from a very early stage of the business, becomes afflictively apparent, how much the Editor, so well furnished with all external appliances and means, is from within unfurnished with means for forming to himself any just notion of Johnson, or of Johnson's Life; and therefore of speaking on that subject with much hope of edifying. Too lightly is it from the first taken for granted that *Hunger*, the great basis of our life, is also its apex and ultimate perfection; that as "Neediness and Greediness and Vainglory" are the chief qualities of most men, so no man, not even a Johnson, acts or can think of acting on any other principle. Whatsoever, therefore, cannot be referred to the two former categories (Need and Greed), is without scruple ranged under the latter. It is here properly that our Editor becomes burdensome; and, to the weaker sort, even a nuisance. "What good is it," will such cry, "when we had still some faint shadow of belief that man was better than a selfish Digesting-machine, what good is it to poke in, at every turn, and explain how this

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and that which we thought noble in old Samuel, was vulgar, base; that for him too there was no reality but in the Stomach; and except Pudding, and the finer species of pudding which is named Praise, life had no pabulum? Why, for instance, when we know that Johnson *loved* his good Wife, and says expressly that their marriage was 'a love-match on both sides',—should two closed lips open to tell us only this: 'Is it not possible that the obvious advantage of having a woman of experience to superintend an establishment of this kind (the Edial School) may have contributed to a match so disproportionate in point of age?—Ed.?' Or again when, in the Text, the honest cynic speaks freely of his former poverty, and it is known that he once lived on fourpence-halfpenny a-day,—need a Commentator advance, and comment thus: 'When we find Dr. Johnson tell unpleasant truths to, or of, other men, let us recollect that he does not appear to have spared himself, on occasions in which he might be forgiven for doing so?' Why in short", continues the exasperated Reader, "should Notes of this species stand affronting me, when there might have been no Note at all?" — Gentle Reader, we answer, Be not wroth. What other could an honest Commentator do, than give thee the best he had? Such was the picture and theorem he had fashioned for himself of the world and of man's doings therein: take it, and draw wise inferences from it. If there did exist a Leader of Public Opinion, and Champion of Ortho-

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doxy in the Church of Jesus of Nazareth, who reckoned that man's glory consisted in not being poor; and that a Sage, and Prophet of his time, must needs blush because the world had paid him at that easy rate of fourpence-halfpenny *per diem*,—was not the fact of such existence worth knowing, worth considering?

Of a much milder hue, yet to us practically of an all-defacing, and for the present enterprise quite ruinous character,—is another grand fundamental failing; the last we shall feel ourselves obliged to take the pain of specifying here. It is, that our Editor has fatally, and almost surprisingly, mistaken the limits of an Editor's function; and so, instead of working on the margin with his Pen, to elucidate as best might be, strikes boldly into the body of the page with his Scissors, and there clips at discretion! Four Books Mr. C. had by him, whereto to gather light for the fifth, which was Boswell's. What does he do but now, in the placidest manner,—slit the whole five into slips, and sew these together into a *sextum quid*, exactly at his own convenience; giving Boswell the credit of the whole! By what art-magic, our readers ask, has he united them? By the simplest of all: by Brackets. Never before was the full virtue of the Bracket made manifest. You begin a sentence under Boswell's guidance, thinking to be carried happily through it by the same: but no; in the middle, perhaps after your semicolon, and some consequent "for",—starts up one of these

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Bracket - ligatures, and stitches you in from half a page, to twenty or thirty pages of a Hawkins, Tyers, Murphy, Piozzi; so that often one must make the old sad reflection, Where we are, we know; whither we are going, no man knoweth! It is truly said also, There is much between the cup and the lip; but here the case is still sadder: for not till after consideration can you ascertain, now when the cup is *at* the lip, what liquor it is you are imbibing; whether Boswell's French wine which you began with, or some Piozzi's ginger-beer, or Hawkins's entire, or perhaps some other great Brewer's penny-swipes or even alegar, which has been surreptitiously substituted instead thereof. A situation almost original; not to be tried a second time! But, in fine, what ideas Mr. Croker entertains of a literary *whole* and the thing called *Book*, and how the very Printer's Devils did not rise in mutiny against such a conglomeration as this, and refuse to print it, — may remain a problem.

But now happily our say is said. All faults, the Moralists tell us, are properly *shortcomings*; crimes themselves are nothing other than a *not doing enough*; a *fighting*, but with defective vigour. How much more a mere insufficiency, and this after good efforts, in handicraft practice! Mr. Croker says: "The worst that can happen is that all the present Editor has contributed may, if the reader so pleases, be rejected as *surplusage*". It is our pleasant duty to take with hearty welcome what he has given; and render thanks even for what he meant to

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give. Next and finally, it is our painful duty to declare, aloud if that be necessary, that his gift, as weighed against the hard money which the Booksellers demand for giving it you, is (in our judgment) very greatly the lighter. No portion, accordingly, of our small floating capital has been embarked in the business, or shall ever be; indeed, were we in the market for such a thing, there is simply *no* Edition of *Boswell* to which this last would seem preferable. And now enough, and more than enough!

We have next a word to say of James Boswell. Boswell has already been much commented upon; but rather in the way of censure and vituperation, than of true recognition. He was a man that brought himself much before the world; confessed that he eagerly coveted fame, or if that were not possible, notoriety; of which latter as he gained far more than seemed his due, the public were incited, not only by their natural love of scandal, but by a special ground of envy, to say whatever ill of him could be said. Out of the fifteen millions that then lived, and had bed and board, in the British Islands, this man has provided us a greater *pleasure* than any other individual, at whose cost we now enjoy ourselves; perhaps has done us a greater *service* than can be specially attributed to more than two or three: yet, ungrateful that we are, no written or spoken eulogy of James Boswell anywhere exists; his recompense in solid pud-



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ding (so far as copyright went) was not excessive; and as for the empty praise, it has altogether been denied him. Men are un-wiser than children; they do *not* know the hand that feeds them.

Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye; visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the Time he lived in; were far from common then; indeed, in such a degree, were almost unexampled; not recognisable therefore by every one; nay, apt even (so strange had they grown) to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to, and had sprung out of. That he was a wine-bibber and gross liver; gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler; had much of the sycophant, alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced too with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb; that he gloried much when the Tailor, by a court-suit, had made a new man of him; that he appeared at the Shakspeare Jubilee with a riband, imprinted "CORSICA BOSWELL", round his hat; and in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without doing and saying more than one pretentious ineptitude: all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. The very look of Boswell seems to have signified so much. In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure, and

sent it from afar; in those bag cheeks, hanging like half-filled wine-skins, still able to contain more; in that coarsely protruded shelf mouth, that fat dewlapped chin; in all this, who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough; much that could not have been ornamental in the temper of a great man's overfed great man (what the Scotch name *funky*), though it had been more natural there? The under part of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, what great and genuine good lay in him was nowise so self-evident. That Boswell was a hunter after spiritual Nobilities, that he loved such, and longed, and even crept and crawled to be near them; that he first (in old Touchwood Auchinleck's phraseology) "took on with Paoli"; and then being off with "the Corsican land-louper", took on with a schoolmaster, "and that kept a schule, and cad it an academy"; that he did all this, and could not help doing it, we account a very singular merit. The man, once for all, had an "open sense", an open loving heart, which so few have; where Excellence existed, he was compelled to acknowledge it; was drawn towards it, and (let the old sulphur-brand of a Laird say what he liked) *could not but walk with it*,—if not as superior, if not as equal, then as inferior and lacking, better so than not at all. If we reflect now that this love of Excellence had not only such an evil nature to triumph over; but also what an *education* and social position withstood

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it, and weighed it down, its innate strength, victorious over all these things, may astonish us. Consider what an inward impulse there must have been, how many mountains of impediment hurled aside, before the Scottish Laird could, as humble servant, embrace the knees (the bosom was not permitted him) of the English Dominie! Your Scottish Laird, says an English naturalist of these days, may be defined as the hungriest and vainest of all bipeds yet known. Boswell too was a Tory; of quite peculiarly feudal, genealogical, pragmatical temper; had been nurtured in an atmosphere of Heraldry, at the feet of a very Gamaliel in that kind; within bare walls, adorned only with pedigrees, amid serving-men in threadbare livery; all things teaching him, from birth upwards, to remember that a Laird was a Laird. Perhaps there was a special vanity in his very blood: old Auchinleck had, if not the gay, tail-spreading, peacock vanity of his son, no little of the slow-stalking, contentious, hissing vanity of the gander; a still more fatal species. Scottish Advocates will yet tell you how the ancient man, having chanced to be the first sheriff appointed (after the abolition of "hereditary jurisdictions") by royal authority, was wont, in dull-snuffing pompous tone, to preface many a deliverance from the bench with these words: "I, the first King's Sheriff in Scotland".

And now behold the worthy Boszy, so prepossessed and held back by nature and by art, fly nevertheless like iron to its magnet, whither

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his better genius called! You may surround the iron and the magnet with what enclosures and encumbrances you please,—with wood, with rubbish, with brass: it matters not, the two feel each other, they struggle restlessly towards each other, they *will* be together. The iron may be a Scottish squirelet, full of gulosity and “gigmanity”; the magnet an English plebeian, and moving rag-and-dust mountain, coarse, proud, irascible, imperious: nevertheless, behold how they embrace, and inseparably cleave to one another! It is one of the strangest phenomena of the past century, that at a time when the old reverent feeling of Discipleship (such as brought men from far countries, with rich gifts, and prostrate soul, to the feet of the Prophets) had passed utterly away from men’s practical experience, and was no longer surmised to exist (as it does), perennial, indestructible, in man’s inmost heart,—James Boswell should have been the individual, of all others, predestined to recall it, in such singular guise, to the wondering, and, for a long while, laughing and unrecognising world. It has been commonly said, The man’s vulgar vanity was all that attached him to Johnson; he delighted to be seen near him, to be thought connected with him. Nor let it be at once granted that no consideration springing out of vulgar vanity could well be absent from the mind of James Boswell, in this his intercourse with Johnson, or in any considerable transaction of his life. At the same time, ask yourself: Whether such vanity, and nothing else, actuated

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him therein; whether this was the true essence and moving principle of the phenomenon, or not rather its outward vesture, and the accidental environment (and defacement) in which it came to light? The man was, by nature and habit, vain; a sycophant-coxcomb, be it granted: but had there been nothing more than vanity in him, was Samuel Johnson the man of men to whom he must attach himself? At the date when Johnson was a poor rusty-coated "scholar", dwelling in Temple-lane, and indeed throughout their whole intercourse afterwards, were there not chancellors and prime ministers enough; graceful gentlemen, the glass of fashion; honour-giving noblemen; dinner-giving rich men; renowned fire-eaters, swordsmen, gowmsmen; Quacks and Realities of all hues,—any one of whom bulked much larger in the world's eye than Johnson ever did? To any one of whom, by half that submissiveness and assiduity, our Bozzy might have recommended himself; and sat there, the envy of surrounding lickspittles; pocketing now solid emolument, swallowing now well-cooked viands and wines of rich vintage; in each case, also, shone on by some glittering reflex of Renown or Notoriety, so as to be the observed of innumerable observers. To no one of whom, however, though otherwise a most diligent solicitor and purveyor, did he so attach himself: such vulgar courtships were his paid drudgery, or leisure amusement; the worship of Johnson was his grand, ideal, voluntary business. Does not the frothy-

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hearted yet enthusiastic man, doffing his Advocate's wig, regularly take post, and hurry up to London, for the sake of his Sage chiefly; as to a Feast of Tabernacles, the Sabbath of his whole year? The plate-licker and wine-bibber dives into Bolt Court, to sip muddy coffee with a cynical old man, and a sour-tempered blind old woman (feeling the cups, whether they are full, with her finger); and patiently endures contradictions without end; too happy so he may but be allowed to listen and live. Nay, it does not appear that vulgar vanity could ever have been much flattered by Boswell's relation to Johnson. Mr. Croker says, Johnson was, to the last, little regarded by the great world; from which, for a vulgar vanity, all honour, as from its fountain, descends. Bozzy, even among Johnson's friends and special admirers, seems rather to have been laughed at than envied: his officious, whisking, consequential ways, the daily reproofs and rebuffs he underwent, could gain from the world no golden but only leaden opinions. His devout Discipleship seemed nothing more than a mean Spanielship, in the general eye. His mighty "constellation", or sun, round whom he, as satellite, observantly gyrated, was, for the mass of men, but a huge ill-snuffed tallow-light, and he a weak night-moth, circling foolishly, dangerously about it, not knowing what he wanted. If he enjoyed Highland dinners and toasts, as henchman to a new sort of chieftain, Henry Erskine, in the domestic "Outer-House", could hand him a shilling

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“for the sight of his Bear”. Doubtless the man was laughed at, and often heard himself laughed at for his Johnsonism. To be envied is the grand and sole aim of vulgar vanity; to be filled with good things is that of sensuality: for Johnson perhaps no man living *envied* poor Bozzy; and of good things (except himself paid for them) there was no vestige in that acquaintanceship. Had nothing other or better than vanity and sensuality been there, Johnson and Boswell had never come together, or had soon and finally separated again.

In fact, the so copious terrestrial dross that welters chaotically, as the outer sphere of this man's character, does but render for us more remarkable, more touching, the celestial spark of goodness, of light, and Reverence for Wisdom, which dwelt in the interior, and could struggle through such encumbrances, and in some degree illuminate and beautify them. There is much lying yet undeveloped in the love of Boswell for Johnson. : A cheering proof, in a time which else utterly wanted and still wants such, that living Wisdom is quite *infinitely* precious to man, is the symbol of the Godlike to him; which even weak eyes may discern; that Loyalty, Discipleship, all that was ever meant by *Hero-worship*, lives perennially in the human bosom; and waits, even in these dead days, only for occasions to unfold it, and inspire all men with it, and again make the world alive! James Boswell we can regard as a practical witness, or real *martyr*, to this high everlasting truth. A wonderful martyr, if you will; and

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god in us triumphing more and more over the beast; striving more and more to subdue it under his feet? Did not the Ancients, in their wise, perennially significant way, figure Nature itself, their sacred *Alt.* or *Pan*, as a portentous commingling of these two discords; as musical, humane, oracular in its upper part, yet ending below in the cloven hairy feet of a goat? The union of melodious, celestial Free-will and Reason with foul Irrationality and Lust; in which, nevertheless, dwell a mysterious unspeakable Fear and half-mad *panic* Awe; as for mortals there well might! And is not man a microcosm, or epitomised mirror of that same Universe; or rather, is not that Universe even Himself, the reflex of his own fearful and wonderful being, "the waste fantasy of his own dream"? No wonder that man, that each man, and James Boswell like the others, should resemble it! The peculiarity in his case was the unusual defect of amalgamation and subordination: the highest lay side by side with the lowest; not morally combined with it and spiritually transfiguring it, but tumbling in half-mechanical juxtaposition with it, and from time to time, as the mad alternation chanced, irradiating it, or eclipsed by it.

The world, as we said, has been but unjust to him; discerning only the outer terrestrial and often sordid mass; without eye, as it generally is, for his inner divine secret; and thus figuring him nowise as a god *Pan*, but simply of the bestial species, like the cattle



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on a thousand hills. Nay, sometimes a strange enough hypothesis has been started of him; as if it were in virtue even of these same bad qualities that he did his good work; as if it were the very fact of his being among the worst men in this world that had enabled him to write one of the best books therein! Falser hypothesis, we may venture to say, never rose in human soul. *Bad* is by its nature negative, and can do *nothing*; whatsoever enables us to *do* anything is by its very nature *good*. Alas, that there should be teachers in Israel, or even learners, to whom this world-ancient fact is still problematical, or even deniable! Boswell wrote a good Book because he had a heart and an eye to discern Wisdom, and an utterance to render it forth; because of his free insight, his lively talent, above all, of his Love and childlike Open-mindedness. His sneaking sycophancies, his greediness and forwardness, whatever was bestial and earthy in him, are so many blemishes in his Book, which still disturb us in its clearness; wholly hindrances, not helps. Towards Johnson, however, his feeling was not Sycophancy, which is the lowest, but Reverence, which is the highest of human feelings. None but a *reverent* man (which so unspeakably few are) could have found his way from Boswell's environment to Johnson's: if such worship for real God-made superiors showed itself also as worship for apparent Tailor-made superiors, even as hollow interested mouth-worship for such, — the case, in this composite human

nature of ours, was not miraculous, the more was the pity! But for ourselves, let every one of us cling to this last article of Faith, and know it as the beginning of all knowledge worth the name: That neither James Boswell's good Book, nor any other good thing, in any time or in any place, was, is or can be performed by any man in virtue of his *badness*, but always and solely in spite thereof.

As for the Book itself, questionless, the universal favour entertained for it is well merited. In worth as a Book we have rated it beyond any other product of the eighteenth century: all Johnson's own Writings, laborious and in their kind genuine above most, stand on a quite inferior level to it; already, indeed, they are becoming obsolete for this generation; and for some future generation may be valuable chiefly as Prolegomena and expository Scholia to this *Johnsoniad* of Boswell. Which of us but remembers, as one of the sunny spots in his existence, the day when he opened these airy volumes, fascinating him by a true natural magic! It was as if the curtains of the Past were drawn aside, and we looked mysteriously into a kindred country, where dwelt our Fathers; inexpressibly dear to us, but which had seemed forever hidden from our eyes. For the dead Night had engulfed it; all was gone, vanished as if it had not been. Nevertheless, wondrously given back to us, there once more it lay; all bright, lucid, blooming; a little island of Creation amid the circumambient Void. There it still lies; like a thing stationary, im-



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edict of Destiny; so that Time shall not utterly, not so soon by several centuries, have dominion over us. A little row of Naphthalamps, with its line of Naphthaholy Night of the clear and holy through the dead Night of the Past: they who are gone are still here; though hidden they are revealed, though dead they yet speak. There it shines, that little miraculously lampit Pathway; shedding its feeble and feeble twilight into the boundless dark Oblivion,—for all that our Johnson *ouched* has become illuminated for us: on which miraculous little Pathway we can still travel, and see wonders.

It is not speaking with exaggeration, but with strict measured sobriety, to say that this Book of Boswell's will give us more real insight into the *History of England* during those days than twenty other Books, falsely entitled "Histories", which take to themselves that special aim. What good is it to me, though innumerable Smolletts and Belshams keep dining in my ears that a man named George the Third was born and bred up, and a man named George the Second died; that Walpole, and the Pelhams, and Chatham, and Rockingham, and Shelburne, and North, with their Coalition or their Separation Ministries, all ousted one another; and vehemently scrambled for "the thing they called the Rudder of Government, but which was in reality the Spigot of Taxation"? That debates were held, and infinite jarring and jargonning took place; and road-bills and enclosure-bills, and game-bills and

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India-bills, and Laws which no man can number, which happily few men needed to trouble their heads with beyond the passing moment, were enacted, and printed by the King's Stationer? That he who sat in Chancery, and rayed out speculation from the Woolsack, was now a man that squinted, now a man that did not squint? To the hungry and thirsty mind all this avails next to nothing. These men and these things, we indeed know, did swim, by strength or by specific levity, as apples or as horse-dung, on the top of the current: but is it by painfully noting the courses, eddyings and bobbings hither and thither of such drift-articles, that you will unfold to me the nature of the current itself; of that mighty-rolling, loud-roaring Life-current, bottomless as the foundations of the Universe, mysterious as its Author? The thing I want to see is not Redbook Lists, and Court Calendars, and Parliamentary Registers, but the LIFE OF MAN in England: what men did, thought, suffered, enjoyed; the form, especially the spirit, of their terrestrial existence, its outward environment, its inward principle; *how* and *what* it was; whence it proceeded, whither it was tending.

Mournful, in truth, is it to behold what the business called "History", in these so enlightened and illuminated times, still continues to be. Can you gather from it, read till your eyes go out, any dimmest shadow of an answer to that great question: How men lived and had their being; were it but economically, as

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what wages they got, and what they bought with these? Unhappily you cannot. History will throw no light on any such matter. At the point where living memory fails, it is all darkness; Mr. Senior and Mr. Sadler must still debate this simplest of all elements in the condition of the Past: Whether men were better off, in their mere ladders and pantries, or were worse off than now! History, as it stands all bound up in gilt volumes, is but a shade more instructive than the wooden volumes of a Backgammon-board. How my Prime Minister was appointed is of less moment to me than How my House-Servant was hired. In these days, ten ordinary Histories of Kings and Courtiers were well exchanged against the tenth part of one good History of Booksellers.

For example, I would fain know the History

of Scotland: who can tell it me? "Robertson," say innumerable voices; "Robertson against the world." I open Robertson; and find there,

through long ages too confused for narrative, and fit only to be presented in the way of epitome and distilled essence, a cunning answer and hypothesis, not to this question: By whom, and by what means, when and how,

was this fair broad Scotland, with its Arts and Manufactures, Temples, Schools, Institutions,

Poetry, Spirit, National Character, created, and made arable, verdant, peculiar, great, here

as I can see some fair section of it lying, kind and strong (like some Bacchus-tamed Lion),

from the Castle-hill of Edinburgh?—but to

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this other question: How did the King keep himself alive in those old days; and restrain so many Butcher-Barons and ravenous Henchmen from utterly extirpating one another, so that killing went on in some sort of moderation? In the one little letter of Æneas Sylvius, from old Scotland, there is more of History than in all this.—At length, however, we come to a luminous age, interesting enough; to the age of the Reformation. All Scotland is awakened to a second higher life: the Spirit of the Highest stirs in every bosom, agitates every bosom; Scotland is convulsed, fermenting, struggling to body itself forth anew. To the herdsman, among his cattle in remote woods; to the craftsman, in his rude, heath-thatched workshop, among his rude guild-brethren; to the great and to the little, a new light has arisen: in town and hamlet groups are gathered, with eloquent looks, and governed or ungovernable tongues; the great and the little go forth together to do battle for the Lord against the mighty. We ask, with breathless eagerness: How was it; how went it on? Let us understand it, let us see it, and know it!—In reply, is handed us a really graceful and most dainty little Scandalous Chronicle (as for some Journal of Fashion) of two persons: Mary Stuart, a Beauty, but over light-headed; and Henry Darnley, a Booby who had fine legs. How these first courted, billed and cooed, according to nature; then pouted, fretted, grew utterly enraged, and blew one another up with gunpowder: this, and not

the History of Scotland, is what we good-naturedly read. Nay, by other hands, something like a horse-load of other Books have been written to prove, that it was the Beauty who blew up the Booby, and that it was not she. Who or what it was, the thing once for all *being* so effectually done, concerns us little. To know Scotland, at that great epoch, were a valuable increase of knowledge: to know poor Darnley, and see him with burning candle, from centre to skin, were no increase of knowledge at all.—Thus is History written. Hence, indeed, comes it that History, which should be “the essence of innumerable Biographies”, will tell us, question it as we like, less than one genuine Biography may do, pleasantly and of its own accord. The time is approaching when History will be attempted on quite other principles; when the Court, the Senate, and the Battlefield, receding more and more into the background, the Temple, the Workshop and Social Hearth will advance more and more into the foreground; and History will not content itself with shaping some answer to that question: How were men *taxed* and *kept quiet* then? but will seek to answer this other infinitely wider and higher question: How and what *were men* then? Not our Government only, or the “*House* wherein our life was led”, but the *Life* itself we led there, will be inquired into. Of which latter it may be found that Government, in any modern sense of the word, is after all but a secondary condition: in the mere sense of *Taxation* and



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*Keeping quiet*, a small, almost a pitiful one.—Meanwhile let us welcome such Boswells, each in his degree, as bring us any genuine contribution, were it never so inadequate, so inconsiderable.

An exception was early taken against this *Life of Johnson*, and all similar enterprises, which we here recommend; and has been transmitted from critic to critic, and repeated in their several dialects, uninterruptedly, ever since: That such jottings-down of careless conversation are an infringement of social privacy; a crime against our highest Freedom, the Freedom of man's intercourse with man. To this accusation, which we have read and heard oftener than enough, might it not be well for once to offer the flattest contradiction, and plea of *Not at all guilty*? Not that conversation is noted down, but that conversation should not deserve noting down, is the evil. Doubtless, if conversation be falsely recorded, then is it simply a Lie; and worthy of being swept, with all despatch, to the Father of Lies. But if, on the other hand, conversation can be authentically recorded, and any one is ready for the task, let him by all means proceed with it; let conversation be kept in remembrance to the latest date possible. Nay, should the consciousness that a man may be among us "taking notes" tend, in any measure, to restrict those floods of idle insincere *speech*; with which the *thought* of mankind is well-nigh drowned,—were it other than the most indubitable benefit? He who speaks honestly cares not,

needs not care, though his words be preserved to remotest time: for him who speaks dishonestly, the fittest of all punishments seems to be this same, which the nature of the case provides. The dishonest speaker, not he only who purposely utters falsehoods, but he who does not purposely, and with sincere heart, utter Truth, and Truth alone; who babbles he knows not what, and has clapped no bridle on his tongue, but lets it run racker, ejecting charter and futility,—is among the most indictable malefactors omitted, or inserted, in the Criminal Calendar. To him that will well consider it, idle speaking is precisely the beginning of all Hollowness, Halfliness, *Infidelity* (want of Faithfulness); the genial atmosphere in which rank weeds of every kind attain the mastery over noble fruits in man's life, and utterly choke them out: one of the most crying maladies of these days, and to be resisted against, and in all ways to the uttermost withstood. Wise, of a wisdom far beyond our shallow depth, was that old precept: *Watch thy tongue*; out of it are the issues of Life! "Man is properly an *incarnated word*": the word that he speaks is the *man* himself. Were eyes put into our head, that we might *see*; or only that we might fancy, and plausibly pretend, we had *seen*? Was the tongue suspended there, that it might tell truly what we had seen, and make man the soul's-brother of man; or only that it might utter vain sounds, jargon, soul-confusing, and so *divide* man, as by enchanted walls of Darkness, from union with

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man? Thou who wearest that cunning, heaven-made organ, a Tongue, think well of this. Speak not, I passionately entreat thee, till thy thought have silently matured itself, till thou have other than mad and mad-making noises to emit: *hold thy tongue* (thou hast it a-holding) till *some* meaning lie behind, to set it wagging. Consider the significance of SILENCE: it is boundless, never by meditating to be exhausted; unspeakably profitable to thee! Cease that chaotic hubbub, wherein thy own soul runs to waste, to confused suicidal dislocation and stupor: out of Silence comes thy strength. "Speech is silvern, Silence is golden; Speech is human, Silence is divine." Fool! thinkest thou that because no Boswell is there with ass-skin and blacklead to note thy jargon, it therefore dies and is harmless? Nothing dies, nothing can die. No idlest word thou speakest but is a seed cast into Time, and grows through all Eternity! The Recording Angel, consider it well, is no fable, but the truest of truths: the paper tablets thou canst burn; of the "iron leaf" there is no burning.—Truly, if we can permit God Almighty to note down our conversation, thinking it good enough for Him,—any poor Boswell need not scruple to work his will of it.

Leaving now this our English *Odyssey*, with its Singer and Scholiast, let us come to the *Ulysses*; that great Samuel Johnson himself, the far-experienced, "much-enduring man", whose labours and pilgrimage are here sung. A full-

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length image of his Existence has been pre-  
served for us : and he, perhaps of all living  
Englishmen, was the one who best deserved  
that honour. For if it is true, and now almost  
proverbial, that "the Life of the lowest mortal,  
if faithfully recorded, would be interesting to  
the highest"; how much more when the mortal  
in question was already distinguished in for-  
tune and natural quality, so that his thinkings  
and doings were not significant of himself only,  
but of large masses of mankind ! "There is  
not a man whom I meet on the streets," says  
one, "but I could like, were it otherwise con-  
venient, to know his Biography"; nevertheless,  
could an enlightened curiosity be so far grati-  
fied, it must be owned the Biography of most  
ought to be, in an extreme degree, *summary*.  
In this world, there is so wonderfully little self-  
subsistence among men; next to no originality  
(though never absolutely *none*) : one Life is too  
servilely the copy of another; and so in whole  
thousands of them you find little that is pro-  
perly new; nothing but the old song sung by  
a new voice, with better or worse execution,  
here and there an ornamental quaver, and false  
notes enough : but the fundamental tune is  
ever the same; and for the *words*, these, all  
that they meant stands written generally on  
the Churchyard-stone : *Natus sum; esurivbam;*  
*quærebam; nunc repletus requiesco.* Mankind sail  
their Life-voyage in huge fleets, following some  
single whale-fishing or herring-fishing Com-  
modore : the logbook of each differs not, in  
essential purport, from that of any other : nay

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the most have no legible logbook (reflection, observation not being among their talents); keep no reckoning, only *keep in sight* of the flagship, — and fish. Read the Commodore's Papers (know *his* Life); and even your lover of that street. Biography will have learned the most of what he sought after.

Or, the servile *imitancy*, and yet also a nobler relationship and mysterious union to one another which lies in such imitancy, of Mankind might be illustrated under the different figure, itself nowise *original*, of a Flock of Sheep. Sheep go in flocks for three reasons: First, because they are of a gregarious temper, and *love* to be together: Secondly, because of their cowardice; they are afraid to be left alone: Thirdly, because the common run of them are dull of sight, to a proverb, and can have no choice in roads; sheep can in fact *see* nothing; in a celestial Luminary, and a scoured pewter Tankard, would discern only that both dazzled them, and were of unspeakable glory. How like their fellow-creatures of the human species! Men too, as was from the first maintained here, are gregarious; then surely faint-hearted enough, trembling to be left by themselves; above all, dull-sighted, down to the verge of utter blindness. Thus are we seen ever running in torrents, and mobs, if we run at all; and after what foolish scoured Tankards, mistaking them for Suns! Foolish Turnip-lanterns likewise, to all appearance supernatural, keep whole nations quaking, their hair on end. Neither know we, except by blind habit, where the

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good pastures lie: solely when the sweet grass is between our teeth, we know it, and chew it; also when grass is bitter and scant, we know it,—and bleat and butt: these last two facts we know of a truth and in very deed. Thus do Men and Sheep play their parts on this Nether Earth; wandering restlessly in large masses, they know not whither; for most part, each following his neighbour, and his own nose.

Nevertheless, not always; look better, you shall find certain that do, in some small degree, *know whither*. Sheep have their Bell-wether; some ram of the folds, endued with more valour, with clearer vision than other sheep; he leads them through the wolds, by height and hollow, to the woods and water-courses, for covert or for pleasant provender; courageously marching, and if need be leaping, and with hoof and horn doing battle, in the van: him they courageously and with assured heart follow. Touching it is, as every herdsman will inform you, with what chivalrous devotedness these woolly Hosts adhere to their Wether; and rush after him, through good report and through bad report, were it into safe shelters and green thymy nooks, or into asphaltic lakes and the jaws of devouring lions. Ever also must we recall that fact which we owe Jean Paul's quick eye: "If you hold a stick before the Wether, so that he, by necessity, leaps in passing you, and then withdraw your stick, the Flock will nevertheless all leap as he did; and the thousandth sheep shall be found im-

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eriously vaulting over air, as the first did over an otherwise impassable barrier." Reader, wouldst thou understand Society, ponder well those ovine proceedings; thou wilt find them all curiously significant.

Now if sheep always, how much more must men always, have their Chief, their Guide! Man too is by nature quite thoroughly *gregarious*: nay, ever he struggles to be something more, to be *social*; not even when Society has become impossible, does that deep-seated tendency and effort forsake him. Man, as if by miraculous magic, imparts his Thoughts, his Mood of mind to man; an unspeakable communion binds all past, present and future men into one indissoluble whole, almost into one living individual. Of which high, mysterious Truth, this disposition to *imitate*, to lead and be led, this impossibility *not* to imitate, is the most constant, and one of the simplest manifestations. To imitate! which of us all can measure the significance that lies in that one word? By virtue of which the infant Man, born at Woolsthorpe, grows up not to be a hairy Savage and chewer of Acorns, but an Isaac Newton and Discoverer of Solar Systems!—Thus both in a celestial and terrestrial sense are we a *Flock*, such as there is no other: nay, looking away from the base and ludicrous to the sublime and sacred side of the matter (since in every matter there are two sides), have not we also a SHEPHERD, "if we will but hear his voice"? Of those stupid multitudes there is no one but has an immortal Soul within him;

a reflex, and living image of God's whole Universe: strangely, from its dim environment, the light of the Highest looks through him;—for which reason, indeed, it is that we claim a brotherhood with him, and so love to know his History, and come into clearer and clearer union with all that he feels, and says, and does.

However, the chief thing to be noted was this: Amid those dull millions, who, as a dull flock, roll hither and thither, whithersoever they are led; and seem all sightless and slavish, accomplishing, attempting little save what the animal instinct in its somewhat higher kind might teach, To keep themselves, and their young ones alive,—are scattered here and there superior natures, whose eye is not destitute of free vision, nor their heart of free volition. These latter, therefore, examine and determine, not what others do, but what it is right to do; towards which, and which only, will they, with such force as is given them, resolutely endeavour: for if the Machine, living or inanimate, is merely *fed*, or desires to be fed, and so *works*; the Person can *will*, and so *do*. These are properly our Men, our Great Men; the guides of the dull host,—which follows them as by an irrevocable decree. They are the chosen of the world: they had this rare faculty not only of “supposing” and “inclining to think”, but of *knowing* and *believing*; the nature of their being was, that they lived not by Hearsay, but by clear Vision; while others hovered and swam along, in the grand Vanity-



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fair of the World, blinded by the mere Shows of things, these saw into the 'Things themselves, and could walk as men having an eternal loadstar, and with their feet on sure paths. Thus was there a *Reality* in their existence; something of a perennial character; in virtue of which indeed it is that the memory of them is perennial. Whoso belongs only to his own age, and reverences only *its* gilt Popinjays or soot-smear'd Mumbojumbos, must needs die with it: though he have been crowned seven times in the Capitol, or seventy and seven times, and Rumour have blown his praises to all the four winds, deafening every ear therewith,—it avails not; there was nothing universal, nothing eternal in him; he must fade away, even as the Popinjay-gildings and Scarecrow-apparel, which he could not see through. The great man does, in good truth, belong to his own age; nay, more so than any other man; being properly the synopsis and epitome of such age with its interests and influences: but belongs likewise to all ages, otherwise he is not great. What was transitory in him passes away; and an immortal part remains, the significance of which is in strict speech inexhaustible,—as that of every *real* object is. Aloft, conspicuous, on his enduring basis, he stands there, serene, unaltering; silently addresses to every new generation a new lesson and monition. Well is his Life worth writing, worth interpreting; and ever, in the new dialect of new times, of re-writing and re-interpreting.

Of such chosen men was Samuel Johnson: not ranking among the highest, or even the high, yet distinctly admitted into that sacred band; whose existence was no idle Dream, but a Reality which he transacted *awake*; nowise a Clothes-horse and Patent Digester, but a genuine Man. By nature he was gifted for the noblest of earthly tasks, that of Priesthood, and Guidance of mankind; by destiny, moreover, he was appointed to this task, and did actually, according to strength, fulfil the same: so that always the question, *How; in what spirit; under what shape?* remains for us to be asked and answered concerning him. For as the highest Gospel was a Biography, so is the Life of every good man still an indubitable Gospel, and preaches to the eye and heart and whole man, so that Devils even must believe and tremble, these gladdest tidings: "Man is heaven-born; not the thrall of Circumstances, of Necessity, but the victorious subduer thereof: behold how he can become the "Announcer of himself and of his Freedom"; and is ever what the Thinker has named him, "The Messias of Nature"!—Yes, Reader, all this that thou hast so often heard about "force of circumstances", "the creature of the time", "balancing of motives", and who knows what melancholy stuff to the like purport, wherein thou, as in a nightmare Dream, sittest paralysed, and hast no force left,—was in very truth, if Johnson and waking men are to be credited, little other than a hag-ridden vision of death-sleep; some *half*-fact, more fatal at times than

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a whole falsehood. Shake it off; awake; up and be doing, even as it is given thee!

The Contradiction which yawns <sup>wide</sup> enough in every Life, which it is the meaning and task of Life to reconcile, was in Johnson's wider than in most. Seldom, for any man, has the contrast between the ethereal heavenward side of things, and the dark sordid earthward, been more glaring: whether we look at Nature's work with him or Fortune's, from first to last, heterogeneity, as of sunbeams and miry clay, is on all hands manifest. Whereby indeed, only this was declared, That *much Life* had been given him; many things to triumph over, a great work to *do*. Happily also he did it; better than the most.

Nature had given him a high, keen-visioned, almost poetic soul; yet withal imprisoned it in an inert, unsightly body: he that could never rest had not limbs that would move with him, but only roll and waddle: the inward eye, all-penetrating, all-embracing, must look through bodily windows that were dim, half-blinded; he so loved men, and "never once *saw* the human face divine"! Not less did he prize the love of men; he was eminently social; the approbation of his fellows was dear to him, "valuable", as he owned, "if from the meanest of human beings": yet the first impression he produced on every man was to be one of aversion, almost of disgust. By Nature it was farther ordered that the imperious Johnson should be born poor: the ruler-soul, strong in its native royalty, generous, uncon-

troublesome, like the lion of the woods, was to be housed, then, in such a dwelling-place: of Disfigurement, Disease, and lastly of a Poverty which itself made him the servant of servants. Thus was the born king likewise a born slave: the divine spirit of Music must awake imprisoned amid dull-crossing universal Discords; the Ariel finds himself encased in the coarse hulls of a Caliban. So is it more or less, we know (and thou, O Reader, knowest and feelest even now), with all men: yet with the fewest men in any such degree as with Johnson.

Fortune, moreover, which had so managed his first appearance in the world, lets not her hand lie idle, or turn the other way, but works unceasingly in the same spirit, while he is journeying through the world. What such a mind, stamped of Nature's noblest metal, though in so ungainly a die, was specially and best of all fitted for, might still be a question. To none of the world's few Incorporated Guilds could he have adjusted himself without difficulty, without distortion; in none been a Guild-brother well at ease. Perhaps, if we look to the strictly practical nature of his faculty, to the strength, decision, method that manifests itself in him, we may say that his calling was rather towards Active than Speculative life; that as Statesman (in the higher, now obsolete sense), Lawgiver, Ruler, in short, as Doer of the Work, he had shone even more than as Speaker of the Word. His honesty of heart, his courageous temper, the value he set on things outward and material, might have made

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him a King among Kings. Had the golden age of those new French Prophets, when it shall be *à chacun selon sa capacité, à chaque capacité selon ses œuvres*, but arrived! Indeed even in our brazen and Birmingham-lacker age, he himself regretted that he had not become a Lawyer, and risen to be Chancellor, which he might well have done. However, it was otherwise appointed. To no man does Fortune throw open all the kingdoms of this world, and say: It is thine; choose where thou wilt dwell! To the most she opens hardly the smallest cranny or doghutch, and says, not without asperity: There, that is thine while thou canst keep it; nestle thyself there, and bless Heaven! Alas, men must fit themselves into many things: some forty years ago, for instance, the noblest and ablest Man in all the British lands might be seen not swaying the royal sceptre, or the pontiff's censer, on the pinnacle of the World, but gauging ale-tubs in the little burgh of Dumfries! Johnson came a little nearer the mark than Burns: but with him too, "Strength was mournfully denied its arena"; he too had to fight Fortune at strange odds, all his life long.

Johnson's disposition for *royalty* (had the Fates so ordered it) is well seen in early boyhood. "His favourites", says Boswell, "used to receive very liberal assistance from him; and such was the submission and deference with which he was treated, that three of the boys, of whom Mr. Hector was sometimes one, used to come in the morning as his humble attend-

ants, and carry him to school. One in the middle stooped, while he sat upon his back, and one on each side supported him; and thus was he borne triumphant." The purfly, sand-blind lubber and blubber, with his open mouth, and face of bruised honeycomb; yet already dominant, imperial, irresistible! Not in the "King's chair" (of human arms), as we see, do his three satellites carry him along: rather on the *Tyrant's saddle*, the back of his fellow-creature, must he ride prosperous!—The child is father of the man. He who had seen fifty years into coming Time, would have felt that little spectacle of mischievous schoolboys to be a great one. For us, who look back on it, and what followed it, now from afar, there arise questions enough: How looked these urchins? What jackets and galligaskins had they; felt headgear, or of dogskin leather? What was old Lichfield doing then; what thinking?—and so on, through the whole series of Corporal Trim's "auxiliary verbs". A picture of it all fashions itself together;—only unhappily we have no brush, and no fingers.

Boyhood is now past; the ferula of Pedagogue waves harmless, in the distance: Samuel has struggled up to uncouth bulk and youth-hood, wrestling with Disease and Poverty, all the way; which two continue still his companions. At College we see little of him; yet thus much, that things went not well. A rugged wild-man of the desert, awakened to the feeling of himself; proud as the proudest, poor as the poorest; stoically shut up, silently

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enduring the incurable: what a world of blackest gloom, with sun-gleams and pale tearful moon-gleams, and flickerings of a celestial and an infernal splendour, was this that now opened for him! But the weather is wintry; and the toes of the man are looking through his shoes. His muddy features grow of a purple and sea-green colour; a flood of black indignation mantling beneath. A truculent, raw-boned figure! Meat he has probably little; hope he has less: his feet, as we said, have come into brotherhood with the cold mire.

"Shall I be particular," inquires Sir John Hawkins, "and relate a circumstance of his distress, that cannot be imputed to him as an effect of his own extravagance or irregularity, and consequently reflects no disgrace on his memory? He had scarce any change of raiment, and, in a short time after Corbet left him, but one pair of shoes, and those so old that his feet were seen through them: a gentleman of his college, the father of an eminent clergyman now living, directed a servitor one morning to place a new pair at the door of Johnson's chamber; who seeing them upon his first going out, so far forgot himself and the spirit which must have actuated his unknown benefactor, that, with all the indignation of an insulted man, he threw them away."

How exceedingly surprising!—The Rev Dr. Hall remarks: "As far as we can judge from a cursory view of the weekly account in the buttery-books, Johnson appears to have lived as well as other commoners and scholars." Alas! such "cursory view of the buttery-books", now from the safe distance of a century, in the

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safe chair of a College Mastership, is one thing; the continual view of the empty or locked buttery itself was quite a different thing. But hear our Knight, how he farther discourses. "Johnson," quoth Sir John, could "not at this early period of his life divest himself of an idea that poverty was disgraceful; and was very severe in his censures of that economy in both our Universities, which exacted at meals the attendance of poor scholars, under the several denominations of Servitors in the one, and Sizers in the other: he thought that the scholars, like the Christian life, levelled all distinctions of rank and worldly preëminence; but in this he was *mistaken*: civil polity," &c., &c.—Too true! It is man's lot to err.

However, Destiny, in all ways, means to prove the mistaken Samuel, and see what stuff is in him. He must leave these buttries of Oxford, Want like an armed man compelling him; retreat into his father's mean home; and there abandon himself for a season to inaction, disappointment, shame and nervous melancholy, high run mad: he is probably the wretchedest man in wide England. In all ways, he too must "become perfect through *suffering*."—High thoughts have visited him: his College Exercises have been praised beyond the walls of College; Pope himself has seen that *Tram-lane*, and approved of it; Samuel had whispered to himself: I too am "one and somewhat". False thoughts; that leave only misery behind! The fever-fire of Ambition is too painfully extinguished (but not cured) in the frost-bath of



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Poverty. Johnson has knocked at the gate, as one having a right; but there was no opening: the world lies all encircled as with brass; nowhere can he find or force the smallest entrance. An ushership at Market Bosworth, and "a disagreement between him and Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of the school", yields him bread of affliction and water of affliction; but so bitter, that unassisted human nature cannot swallow them. Young Samson will grind no more in the Philistine mill of Bosworth; quits hold of Sir Wolstan, and the "domestic chaplaincy, so far at least as to say grace at table", and also to be "treated with what he represented as intolerable harshness"; and so, after "some months of such complicated misery", feeling doubtless that there are worse things in the world than quick death by Famine, "relinquishes a situation, which all his life afterwards he recollected with the strongest aversion, and even horror". Men like Johnson are properly called the Forlorn Hope of the World: judge whether his hope was forlorn or not, by this Letter to a dull oily Printer, who called himself *Sylvanus Urban*:

"Sir,—As you appear no less sensible than your readers of the defect of your poetical article, you will not be displeased if (in order to the improvement of it) I communicate to you the sentiments of a person who will undertake, on reasonable terms, sometimes to fill a column.

"His opinion is, that the public would", &c., &c.

"If such a correspondence will be agreeable to you, be pleased to inform me in two posts, what

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the conditions are on which you shall expect it. Your late offer (for a Prize Poem) gives me no reason to distrust your generosity. If you engage in any literary projects besides this paper, I have other designs to impart."

Reader, the generous person, to whom this letter goes addressed, is "Mr. Edmund Cave, at St. John's Gate, London"; the addresser of it is Samuel Johnson, in Birmingham, Warwickshire.

Nevertheless, Life rallies in the man; re-asserts its right to be *lived*, even to be enjoyed. "Better a small bush," say the Scotch, "than no shelter": Johnson learns to be contented with humble human things; and is there not already an actual realized human Existence, all stirring and living on every hand of him? Go thou and do likewise! In Birmingham itself, with his own purchased goose-quill, he can earn "five guineas"; nay, finally, the choicest terrestrial good: a Friend, who will be Wife to him! Johnson's marriage with the good Widow Porter has been treated with ridicule by many mortals, who apparently had no understanding thereof. That the purblind, seamy-faced Wildman, stalking lonely, woe-stricken, like some Irish Gallowglass with peeled club, whose speech no man knew, whose look all men both laughed at and shuddered at, should find any brave female heart to acknowledge, at first sight and hearing of him, "This is the most sensible man I ever met with"; and then, with generous courage, to take him to itself,

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and say, Be thou mine; be thou warmed here, and thawed to life!—in all this, in the kind Widow's love and pity for him, in Johnson's love and gratitude, there is actually no matter for ridicule. Their wedded life, as is the common lot, was made up of drizzle and dry weather; but innocence and worth dwelt in it; and when death had ended it, a certain sacredness: Johnson's deathless affection for his Tetty was always venerable and noble. However, be this as it might, Johnson is now minded to wed; and will live by the trade of Pedagogy, for by this also may life be kept in. Let the world therefore take notice: "*At Edial near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded, and taught the Latin and Greek languages, by—* SAMUEL JOHNSON". Had this Edial enterprise prospered, how different might the issue have been! Johnson had lived a life of unnoticed nobleness, or swoln into some amorphous Dr. Parr, of no avail to us; Bozzy would have dwindled into official insignificance, or risen by some other elevation; old Auchinleck had never been afflicted with "ane that keeped a schule", or obliged to violate hospitality by a "Cromwell do? God, sir, he gart kings ken that there was a *lith* in their neck!" But the Edial enterprise did not prosper; Destiny had other work appointed for Samuel Johnson; and young gentlemen got board where they could elsewhere find it. This man was to become a Teacher of grown gentlemen, in the most surprising way; a Man of Letters, and Ruler of the British Nation for some time,—not of

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their bodies merely but of their minds, not *over* them but *in* them.

The career of Literature could not, in John-son's day, any more than now, be said to lie along the shores of a Pactolus: whatever else might be gathered there, gold-dust was nowise the chief produce. The world, from the times of Socrates, St. Paul, and far earlier, has always had its Teachers; and always treated them in a peculiar way. A shrewd Townclerk (not of Ephesus), once, in founding a Burgh-Seminary, when the question came, How the School-masters should be maintained? delivered this brief counsel: "D—n them, keep them *poor*!" Considerable wisdom may lie in this aphorism. At all events, we see, the world has acted on it long, and indeed improved on it,—putting many a Schoolmaster of its great Burgh-Seminary to a death, which even *cost* it something. The world, it is true, had for some time been too busy to go out of its way, and *put* any Author to death; however, the old sentence pronounced against them was found to be pretty sufficient. The first Writers, being Monks, were sworn to a vow of Poverty; the modern Authors had no need to swear to it. This was the epoch when an Orway could still die of hunger; not to speak of your innumerable Scrogginses, whom "the Muse found stretched beneath a rug", with "rusty grate unconscious of a fire", stocking - nightcap, sanded floor, and all the other escutcheons of the craft, time out of mind the heirlooms of

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Authorship. Scroggins, however, seems to have been but an idler; not at all so diligent as worthy Mr. Boyce, whom we might have seen *sitting up* in bed, with his wearing-apparel of Blanket about him, and a hole slit in the same, that his hand might be at liberty to work in its vocation. The worst was, that too frequently a blackguard recklessness of temper ensued, incapable of turning to account what good the gods even here had provided: your Boyces acted on some stoico-epicurean principle of *carpe diem*, as men do in bombarded towns, and seasons of raging pestilence;—and so had lost not only their life, and presence of mind, but their status as persons of respectability. The trade of Author was at about one of its lowest ebbs when Johnson embarked on it.

Accordingly we find no mention of Illuminations in the city of London, when this same Ruler of the British Nation arrived in it: no cannon-salvos are fired; no flourish of drums and trumpets greets his appearance on the scene. He enters quite quietly, with some copper halfpence in his pocket; creeps into lodgings in Exeter Street, Strand; and has a Coronation Pontiff also, of not less peculiar equipment, whom, with all submissiveness, he must wait upon, in his Vatican of St. John's Gate. This is the dull oily Printer alluded to above.

“Cave's temper”, says our Knight Hawkins, “was phlegmatic: though he assumed, as the publisher

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of the Magazine, the name of Sylvanus Urban, he had few of those qualities that constitute urbanity. Judge of his want of them by this question, which he once put to an author: 'Mr. —, I hear you have just published a pamphlet, and am told there is a very good paragraph in it upon the subject of music: did you write that yourself?' His discernment was also slow; and as he had already at his command some writers of prose and verse, in the language of Booksellers, are called good hands, he was the backwader in making advances, or courting an intimacy with Johnson. Upon the first approach of a stranger, his practice was to continue sitting; a posture in which he was ever to be found, and for a few minutes to continue silent: if at any time he was inclined to begin the discourse, it was generally by putting a leaf of the Magazine, then in the press, into the hand of his visitor, and asking his opinion of it. . . .

"He was so incompetent a judge of Johnson's abilities, that meaning at one time to dazzle him with the splendour of some of those luminaries in Literature, who favoured him with their correspondence, he told him that if he would, in the evening, be at a certain alehouse in the neighbourhood of Clerkenwell, he might have a chance of seeing Mr. Browne and another or two of those illustrious contributors: Johnson accepted the invitation; and being introduced by Cave, dressed in a loose horse-man's coat, and such a great bushy wig as he constantly wore, to the sight of Mr. Browne, whom he found sitting at the upper end of a long table, in a cloud of tobacco-smoke, had his curiosity gratified."

In fact, if we look seriously into the condition of Authorship at that period, we shall find that Johnson had undertaken one of the ruggedest of all possible enterprises; that here

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as elsewhere Fortune had given him unspeakable Contradictions to reconcile. For a man of Johnson's stamp, the Problem was twofold: *First*, not only as the humble but indispensable condition of all else, to keep himself, if so might be, *alive*; but *secondly*, to keep himself alive by speaking forth the *Truth* that was in him, and speaking it *truly*, that is, in the clearest and fittest utterance the Heavens had enabled him to give it, let the Earth say to this what she liked. Of which twofold Problem if it be hard to solve either member separately, how incalculably more so to solve it, when both are conjoined, and work with endless complication into one another! He that finds himself already *kept alive* can sometimes (unhappily not always) speak a little truth; he that finds himself able and willing, to all lengths, to *speak lies*, may, by watching how the wind sits, scrape together a livelihood, sometimes of great splendour: he, again, who finds himself provided with *neither* endowment, has but a ticklish game to play, and shall have praises if he win it. Let us look a little at both faces of the matter; and see what front they then offered our Adventurer, what front he offered them.

At the time of Johnson's appearance on the field, Literature, in many senses, was in a transitional state; chiefly in this sense, as respects the pecuniary subsistence of its cultivators. It was in the very act of passing from the protection of Patrons into that of the Public; no longer to supply its necessities by laudatory

Dedications to the Great, but by judicious Bargains with the Booksellers. This happy change has been much sung and celebrated; many a "lord of the lion heart and eagle eye" looking back with scorn enough on the bygone system of Dependency: so that now it were perhaps well to consider, for a moment, what good might also be in it, what gratitude we owe it. That a good was in it, admits not of doubt. Whatsoever has existed has had its value: without some truth and worth lying in it, the thing could not have hung together, and been the organ and sustenance, and method of action, for men that reasoned and were alive. Translate a Falshood which is wholly false into Practice, the result comes out error; there is no fruit or issue to be derived from it. That in an age, when a Nobleman was still noble, still with his wealth the protector of worthy and humane things, and still venerated as such, a poor Man of Genius, his brother in nobleness, should, with unfeigned reverence, address him and say: "I have found Wisdom here, and would fain proclaim it abroad; wilt thou, of thy abundance, afford me the means?"—in all this there was no baseness; it was wholly an honest proposal, which a free man might make, and a free man listen to. So might a Tasso, with a *Gerusalemme* in his hand or in his head, speak to a Duke of Ferrara; so might a Shakspeare to his Southampton; and Count Aratus generally to their rich Protectors,—in some countries, down almost to these days. It was only when the reverence became



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*feigned*, that baseness entered into the transaction on both sides; and, indeed, flourished there with rapid luxuriance, till that became disgraceful for a Dryden, which a Shakspeare could once practise without offence.

Neither, it is very true, was the new way of Bookseller Mecænasship worthless; which opened itself at this juncture, for the most important of all transport-trades, now when the old way had become too miry and impassable. Remark, moreover, how this second sort of Mecænasship, after carrying us through nearly a century of Literary Time, appears now to have well-nigh discharged *its* function also; and to be working pretty rapidly towards some *third* method, the exact conditions of which are yet nowise visible. Thus all things have their end; and we should part with them all, not in anger, but in peace. The Bookseller-System, during its peculiar century, the whole of the eighteenth, did carry us handsomely along; and many good Works it has left us, and many good Men it maintained: if it is now expiring by PUFFERY, as the Patronage-System did by FLATTERY (for *Lying* is ever the forerunner of Death, nay is itself Death), let us not forget its benefits; how it nursed Literature through boyhood and school-years, as Patronage had wrapped it in soft swaddling-bands;—till now we see it about to put on the *toga virilis*, could it but *find* any such!

There is tolerable travelling on the beaten road, run how it may; only on the new road not yet levelled and paved, and on the old road

all broken into ruts and quagmires, is the travelling bad or impracticable. In which state it was that John-son now found Literature; and out of which, let us also say, he manfully carried it. What lies always in the *transition* from one method to another. In most a century before, some scarce visible or ponderable pittance of wages had occasionally been yielded by the Seller of Books to the Writer of them: the original Covenant, stipulating to produce *Paradise Lost* on the one hand, and *Five Pounds Sterling* on the other, still lies inspection and purchase by the curious, at a Bookshop in Chancery Lane. Thus had the matter gone on, in a mixed confused way, for some threescore years;—as ever in such things, the old system *overlaps* the new, by some generation or two, and only dies quite out when the new has got a complete organization, and the first Authors, the very first of any significance, and composed by the day's wages of his craft, was Samuel Johnson. Among

At the time of Johnson's appearance, there were still two ways, on which an Author might attempt proceeding: there were the Maccenases proper in the West End of London; and the Maccenasess virtual of St. John's Gate and Paternoster Row. To a considerate man it might seem uncertain which method were pre-

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ferable: neither had very high attractions; the Patron's aid was now well-nigh *necessarily* polluted by sycophancy, before it could come to hand; the Bookseller's was deformed with greedy stupidity, not to say entire wooden-headedness and disgust (so that an Osborne even required to be knocked down, by an author of spirit), and could barely keep the thread of life together. The one was the wages of suffering and poverty; the other, unless you gave strict heed to it, the wages of sin. In time, Johnson had opportunity of looking into both methods, and ascertaining what they were; but found, at first trial, that the former would in nowise do for him. Listen, once again, to that far-famed Blast of Doom, proclaiming into the ear of Lord Chesterfield, and, through him, of the listening world, that patronage should be no more!

"Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my Work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind: but it has been delayed till I am indiffer-

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ent and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it. I hope, it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations, where no benefit has been received; or as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my Work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning; I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less: for I have long been awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation.

"My Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

And thus must the rebellious "Sam. Johnson" turn him to the Bookselling guild, and the wondrous chaos of "Author by trade", and oily Printer, "with loose horseman's coat and such a great bushy wig as he constantly wore", at the head of a long table in the alehouse at Clerkenwell"—gird himself together for the warfare; having no alternative!

of the twofold Problem now set before John-son: the speaking forth of *Truth*. Nay taken by itself, it had in those days become so complex as to puzzle strongest heads; and even to turn high heads of that sort into mere hollow *evizards*, speaking neither truth nor false-

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hood, nor anything but what the Prompter and Player (*ὑποκριτής*) put into them. Alas! for poor Johnson Contradiction abounded; in spirituals and in temporals, within and without. Born with the strongest unconquerable love of just Insight, he must begin to live and learn in a scene where Prejudice flourishes with rank luxuriance. England was all confused enough, sightless and yet restless, take it where you would; but figure the best intellect in England nursed up to manhood in the idol-cavern of a poor Tradesman's house, in the cathedral city of Lichfield! What is Truth? said jesting Pilate. What is Truth? might earnest Johnson much more emphatically say. Truth, no longer, like the Phoenix, in rainbow plumage, poured, from her glittering beak, such tones of sweetest melody as took captive every ear: the Phoenix (waxing old) had wellnigh ceased her singing, and empty wearisome Cuckoos, and doleful monotonous Owls, innumerable Jays also, and twittering Sparrows on the housetop, pretended they were repeating her.

It was wholly a divided age, that of Johnson; Unity existed nowhere, in its Heaven, or in its Earth. Society, through every fibre, was rent asunder: all things, it was then becoming visible, but could not then be understood, were moving onwards, with an impulse received ages before, yet now first with a decisive rapidity, towards that great chaotic gulf, where, whether in the shape of French Revolutions, Reform Bills, or what shape soever, bloody

or bloodless, the descent and engulfment assume, we now see them weltering and boiling. Already Cant, as once before hinted, had begun to play its wonderful part, for the hour was come: two ghastly Apparitions, unreal *simulacra* both, Hypocrisy and Atheism, are already, in silence, parting the world. Opinion and action, which should live together as wedded pair, "one flesh", more properly as Soul and Body, have commenced their open quarrel, and are suing for a separate maintenance,—as if they could exist separately. To the earnest mind, in any position, firm footing and a life of Truth was becoming daily more difficult: in Johnson's position, it was more difficult than in almost any other. If, as for a devout nature was inevitable and indispensable, he looked up to Religion, as to the polestar of his voyage, already there was no *fixed* polestar any longer visible; but two stars, a whole constellation of stars, each proclaiming itself as the true. There was the red portentous comet-star of Infidelity; the dim fixed-star, burning ever dimmer, uncertain now whether not an atmospheric *meteor*, of Orthodoxy: which of these to choose? The keener intellects of Europe had, almost without exception, ranged themselves under the former: for some half century, it had been the general effort of European speculation to proclaim that Destruction of Falsehood was the only Truth; daily had Denial waxed stronger and stronger, Belief sunk more and more into decay. From our Bolingbrokes and Tolands the sceptical

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fever had passed into France, into Scotland; and already it smouldered, far and wide, secretly eating out the heart of England. Bayle had played his part; Voltaire, on a wider theatre, was playing his,—Johnson's senior by some fifteen years: Hume and Johnson were children almost of the same year. To this keener order of intellects did Johnson's indisputably belong: was he to join them; was he to oppose them? A complicated question: for, alas, the Church itself is no longer, even to him, wholly of true adamant, but of adamant and baked mud conjoined: the zealously Devout must find his Church tottering; and pause amazed to see, instead of inspired Priest, many a swine-feeding Trulliber ministering at her altar. It is not the least curious of the incoherences which Johnson had to reconcile, that, though by nature contemptuous and incredulous, he was, at that time of day, to find his safety and glory in defending, with his whole might, the traditions of the elders.

Not less perplexingly intricate, and on both sides hollow or questionable, was the aspect of Politics. Whigs struggling blindly forward, Tories holding blindly back; each with some forecast of a half truth; neither with any forecast of the whole! Admire here this other Contradiction in the life of Johnson; that, though the most ungovernable, and in practice the most independent of men, he must be a Jacobite, and worshipper of the Divine Right. In Politics also there are Irreconcilables enough for him. As, indeed, how could it be other-

wise? For when Religion is torn asunder, and the very heart of man's existence set against itself, then in all subordinate departments there must needs be hollowness, incoherence. The English Nation had rebelled against a Tyrant; and, by the hands of religious tyrannicides, exacted stern vengeance of him: Democracy had risen iron-sinewed, and, "like an infant Hercules, strangled serpents in its cradle". But as yet none knew the meaning or extent of the phenomenon: Europe was not ripe for it; not to be ripened for it, but by the culture and various experience of another century and a half. And now, when the King-killers were all swept away, and a milder *second* picture was painted over the canvas of the *first*, and betitled "Glorious Revolution", who doubted but the catastrophe was over, the whole business finished, and Democracy gone to its long sleep? Yet was it like a business finished and not finished; a lingering uneasiness dwell in all minds: the deep-lying, resistless Tendency, which had still to be *obeyed*, could no longer be *recognised*; thus was there halfness, insincerity, uncertainty in men's ways; instead of heroic Puritans and heroic Cavaliers, came now a dawdling set of argumentative Whigs, and a dawdling set of deaf-eared Tories; each half-foolish, each half-false. The Whigs were false and without basis; inasmuch as their whole object was Resistance, Criticism, Demolition,—they knew not why, or towards what issue. In Whiggism, ever since a Charles and his Jeffries had ceased



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to meddle with it, and to have any Russel or Sydney to meddle with, there could be no divineness of character; not till, in these latter days, it took the figure of a thorough-going, all-defying Radicalism, was there any solid footing for it to stand on. Of the like uncertain, half-hollow nature had Toryism become, in Johnson's time; preaching forth indeed an everlasting truth, the duty of Loyalty; yet now, ever since the final expulsion of the Stuarts, having no *Person*, but only an *Office* to be loyal to; no living *Soul* to worship, but only a dead velvet-cushioned *Chair*. Its attitude, therefore, was stiff-necked refusal to move; as that of Whiggism was clamorous command to move,—let rhyme and reason, on both hands, say to it what they might. The consequence was: Immeasurable floods of contentious jargon, tending nowhither; false conviction; false resistance to conviction; decay (ultimately to become decease) of whatsoever was once understood by the words, *Principle*, or *Honesty* of heart; the louder and louder triumph of *Halfness* and *Plausibility* over *Wholeness* and *Truth*;—at last, this all-overshadowing efflorescence of QUACKERY, which we now see, with all its deadening and killing 'fruits, in all its innumerable branches, down to the lowest. How, between these jarring extremes, wherein the rotten lay so inextricably intermingled with the sound, and as yet no eye could see through the ulterior meaning of the matter, was a faithful and true man to adjust himself?

That Johnson, in spite of all drawbacks,

adopted the Conservative side; stationed himself as the unyielding opponent of Innovation, resolute to hold fast the form of sound words, could not but increase, in no small measure, the difficulties he had to strive with. We mean, the *moral* difficulties; for in *economic* respects, it might be pretty equally balanced; the Tory servant of the Public had perhaps about the same chance of promotion as the Whig: and all the promotion Johnson aimed at was the privilege *à fieri*. But, for what, though unavowed, was no less indispensable, for his peace of conscience, and the clear ascertainment and feeling of his Duty as an inhabitant of God's world, the case was hereby rendered much more complex. To resist Innovation is easy enough on one condition: that you resist Inquiry. This is, and was, the common expedient of your common Conservatives; but it would not do for Johnson: he was a zealous recommender and practitioner of Inquiry; once for all, could not and would not believe, much less speak and act, a Falsehood: the *form* of sound words, which he held fast, must have a *meaning* in it. Here lay the difficulty: to behold a portentous mixture of True and False, and feel that he must dwell and fight there; yet to love and defend only the True. How worship, when you cannot and will not be an idolater; yet cannot help discerning that the Symbol of your Divinity has half become idolatrous? This was the question, which Johnson, the man both of clear eye and devout believing heart,

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must answer,—at peril of his life. The Whig or Sceptic, on the other hand, had a much simpler part to play. To him only the idolatrous side of things, nowise the divine one, lay visible: not *worship*, therefore, nay, in the strict sense not heart-honesty, only at most lip- and hand-honesty, is required of him. What spiritual force is his, he can conscientiously employ in the work of cavilling, of pulling down what is False. For the rest, that there is or can be any Truth of a higher than sensual nature, has not occurred to him. The utmost, therefore, that he as man has to aim at, is RESPECTABILITY, the suffrages of his fellow-men. Such suffrages he may weigh as well as count; or count only: according as he is a Burke, or a Wilkes. But beyond these there lies nothing divine for him; these attained, all is attained. Thus is his whole world distinct and rounded-in; a clear goal is set before him; a firm path, rougher or smoother; at worst a firm region wherein to seek a path: let him gird up his loins, and travel on without misgivings! For the honest Conservative, again, nothing is distinct, nothing rounded-in: RESPECTABILITY can nowise be his highest Godhead; not one aim, but two conflicting aims to be continually reconciled by him, has he to strive after. A difficult position, as we said; which accordingly the most did, even in those days, but half defend: by the surrender, namely, of their own too cumbersome *honesty*, or even *understanding*; after which the completest defence was worth little. Into this difficult position

Johnson, nevertheless, threw himself: found it indeed full of difficulties; yet held it out manfully, as an honest-hearted, open-sighted man, while life was in him.

Such was that same "twofold Problem," set before Samuel Johnson. Consider all these moral difficulties; and add to them the fearful aggravation, which lay in that other circumstance, that he needed a continual appeal to the Public, must continually produce a certain impression and conviction on the Public; that if he did not, he ceased to have "provision for the day that was passing over him"; he could not any longer live! How a vulgar character, once launched into this wild element; driven onwards by Fear and Famine; without other aim than to clutch what Provender (of Enjoyment in any kind) he could get, always if possible keeping *quite* clear of the Gallows and Pillory, that is to say, minding heedfully both "person" and "character"—would have floated hither and thither in it; and contrived to eat some three repasts daily, and wear some three suits yearly, and then to depart and disappear, having consumed his last ration: all this might be worth knowing, but were in itself a trivial knowledge. How a noble man, resolute for the Truth, to whom Shams and Lies were once for all an abomination, was to act in it: *here* lay the mystery. By what methods, by what gifts of eye and hand, does a heroic Samuel Johnson, now when cast forth into that waste Chaos of Authorship, maddest of things, a mingled Phlegethon and Fleet-ditch,

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with its floating lumber, and sea-krakens, and mud-spectres,—shape himself a voyage; of the *transient* driftwood, and the *enduring* iron, build him a sea-worthy Life-boat, and sail therein, undrowned, unpolluted, through the roaring “mother of dead dogs”, onwards to an eternal Landmark, and City that hath foundations? This high question is even the one answered in Boswell’s Book; which Book we therefore, not so falsely, have named a *Heroic Poem*; for in it there lies the whole argument of such. Glory to our brave Samuel! He accomplished this wonderful Problem; and now through long generations, we point to him, and say: Here also was a Man; let the world once more have assurance of a Man!

Had there been in Johnson, now when afloat on that confusion worse confounded of grandeur and squalor, no light but an earthly outward one, he too must have made shipwreck. With his diseased body, and vehement voracious heart, how easy for him to become a *carpe-diem* Philosopher, like the rest, and live and die as miserably as any Boyce of that Brotherhood! But happily there was a higher light for him; shining as a lamp to his path; which, in all paths, would teach him to act and walk not as a fool, but as wise, and in those evil days too “redeeming the time”. Under dimmer or clearer manifestations, a Truth had been revealed to him: I also am a Man; even in this unutterable element of Authorship, I may live as beseems a Man! That Wrong is not only different from Right,

but that it is in strict scientific terms *infinitely* different; even as the gaining of the whole world set against the losing of one's own soul, or (as Johnson had it) a Heaven set against a Hell; that in all situations out of the Pit of Tophet, wherein a living Man has stood or can stand, there is actually a Prize of quite *infinite* value placed within his reach, namely a *Duty* for him to do: this highest Gospel, which forms the basis and worth of all other Gospels whatsoever, had been revealed to Samuel Johnson; and the man had believed it, and laid it faithfully to heart. Such knowledge of the *transcendental*, immeasurable character of Duty, we call the basis of all Gospels, the essence of all Religion: he who with his whole soul knows not this, as yet knows nothing, as yet is properly nothing.

This, happily for him, Johnson was one of those that knew: under a certain authentic Symbol, it stood forever present to his eyes: a Symbol, indeed, waxing old as doth a garment; yet which had guided forward, as their Banner and celestial Pillar of Fire, innumerable saints and witnesses, the fathers of our modern world; and for him also had still a sacred significance. It does not appear that, at any time, Johnson was what we call irreligious: but in his sorrows and isolation, when hope died away, and only a long vista of suffering and toil lay before him to the end, then first did Religion shine forth in its meek, everlasting clearness; even as the stars do in black night, which in the daytime and dusk were hidden

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by inferior lights. How a true man, in the midst of errors and uncertainties, shall work out for himself a sure Life-truth; and adjusting the transient to the eternal, amid the fragments of ruined Temples build up, with toil and pain, a little Altar for himself, and worship there; how Samuel Johnson, in the era of Voltaire, can purify and fortify his soul, and hold real communion with the Highest, "in the Church of St. Clement Danes": this too stands all unfolded in his Biography, and is among the most touching and memorable things there; a thing to be looked at with pity, admiration, awe. Johnson's Religion was as the light of life to him; without it, his heart was all sick, dark and had no guidance left.

He is now enlisted, or impressed, into that unspeakable shoeblack-seraph Army of Authors; but can feel hereby that he fights under a celestial flag, and will quit him like a man. The first grand requisite, an assured heart, he therefore has: what his outward equipments and accoutrements are, is the next question; an important, though inferior one. His intellectual stock, intrinsically viewed, is perhaps inconsiderable: the furnishings of an English School and English University; good knowledge of the Latin tongue, a more uncertain one of Greek: this is a rather slender stock of Education wherewith to front the world. But then it is to be remembered that his world was England; that such was the culture England commonly supplied and expected. Besides Johnson has been a voracious reader,

bushy wig"; Samuel too ragged to show face, yet "made a happy man of" by hearing his praise spoken. If to Johnson himself, then much more to us, may that St. John's Gate be a place we can "never pass without veneration".

Poverty, Distress, and as yet Obscurity, are his companions: so poor is he that his Wife must leave him, and seek shelter among other relations; Johnson's household has accommodation for one inmate only. To all his ever-varying, ever-recurring troubles, moreover, must be added this continual one of ill-health, and its concomitant depressiveness: a galling load, which would have crushed most common mortals into desperation, is his appointed ballast and life-burden; he "could not remember the day he had passed free from pain". Nevertheless, Life, as we said before, is always Life: a healthy soul, imprison it as you will, in squalid garrets, shabby coat, bodily sickness, or whatever else, will assert its heaven-granted indefeasible Freedom, its right to conquer difficulties, to do work, even to feel gladness. Johnson does not whine over his existence, but manfully makes the most and best of it. "He said, a man might live in a garret at eighteenpence a-week: few people would inquire where he lodged; and if they did, it was easy to say, 'Sir, I am to be found at such a place.' By spending threepence in a coffee-house, he might be for some hours every day in very good company; he might dine for sixpence, breakfast on bread-and-milk



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for a penny, and do without supper. On *clean-shirt-day* he went abroad, and paid visits." Think by whom, and of whom this was uttered, and ask then, Whether there is more pathos in it than in a whole circulating-library of *Giaours* and *Harolds*, or less pathos? On another occasion, "when Dr. Johnson, one day, read his own Satire, in which the life of a scholar is painted, with the various obstructions thrown in his way to fortune and to fame, he burst into a passion of tears: Mr. Thrale's family and Mr. Scott only were present, who, in a jocose way, clapped him on the back, and said, 'What's all this, my dear sir? Why you and I and *Hercules*, you know, were all troubled with *melancholy*.' He was a very large man, and made-out the triumvirate with Johnson and *Hercules* comically enough." These were sweet tears; the sweet victorious remembrance lay in them of toils indeed frightful, yet never flinched from, and now triumphed over. "One day it shall delight you also to remember labour done!"—Neither, though Johnson is obscure and poor, need the highest enjoyment of existence, that of heart freely communicating with heart, be denied him. Savage and he wander homeless through the streets; without bed, yet not without friendly converse; such another conversation not, it is like, producible in the proudest drawing-room of London. Nor, under the void Night, upon the hard pavement, are their own woes the only topic: nowise; they "will stand by their country".

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the two, "Backwoodsmen" of the Brick Desert!

Of all outward evils Obscurity is perhaps in

itself the least. To Johnson, as to a healthy-minded man, the fantastic article, sold or given under the title of *Fame*, had little or no value but its intrinsic one. He prized it as the means of getting him employment and good wages; scarcely as anything more.

His light and guidance came from a loftier source; of which, in honest aversion to all hypocrisy or pretentious talk, he spoke not to men; nay perhaps, being of a *healthy* mind, had never spoken to himself. We reckon it a striking fact in Johnson's history, this carelessness of his to *Fame*. Most authors speak of their "*Fame*" as if it were a quite priceless matter; the grand ultimatum, and heavenly Constantine's-Banner they had to follow, and conquer under.—Thy "*Fame*!" Unhappy mortal, where will it and thou both be in some fifty years? Shakspeare himself has lasted but two hundred; Homer (partly by accident) three thousand: and does not already

an ETERNITY encircle every *Me* and every *Thee*? Cease, then, to sit feverishly hatching on that "*Fame*" of thine; and flapping, and shrieking with fierce hisses, like brood-geese on her last egg, if man shall or dare approach it! Quarrel not with me, hate me not, my Brother: make what thou canst of thy egg, and welcome: God knows, I will not steal it; I believe it to be *adde*.—Johnson, for his part, was no man to be killed by a review; concerning

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which matter, it was said by a benevolent person: If any author *can* be reviewed to death, let it be, with all convenient despatch, *done*. Johnson thankfully receives any word spoken in his favour; is nowise disobliged by a lampoon, but will look at it, if pointed out to him, and show how it might have been done better: the lampoon itself is indeed *nothing*, a soap-bubble that, next moment, will become a drop of sour suds; but in the mean while, if it do anything, it keeps him more in the world's eye, and the next *bargain* will be all the richer: "Sir, if they should cease to talk of me, I must starve". Sound heart and understanding head: these fail no man, not even a Man of Letters!

Obscurity, however, was, in Johnson's case, whether a light or heavy evil, likely to be no lasting one. He is animated by the spirit of a true *workman*, resolute to do his work well; and he *does* his work well; all his work, that of writing, that of living. A man of this stamp is unhappily not so common in the literary or in any other department of the world, that he can continue always unnoticed. By slow degrees, Johnson emerges; looming, at first, huge and dim in the eye of an observant few; at last disclosed, in his real proportions, to the eye of the whole world, and encircled with a "light-nimbus" of glory, so that whoso is not blind must and shall behold him. By slow degrees, we said; for this also is notable; slow but sure: as his fame waxes not by exaggerated clamour of what he *seems*

to be, but by better and better insight of what he is, so it will last and stand wearing, being genuine. Thus indeed is it always, or nearly always, with true fame. The heavenly Luminary rises amid vapours: stargazers enough must scan it, with critical telescopes; it makes no blazing, the world can either look at it, or forbear looking at it; not till after a time and times, does its celestial eternal nature become indubitable. Pleasant, on the other hand, is the blazing of a Tarbarrel; the crowd dance merrily round it, with loud huzzaing, universal three-times-three, and, like Homer's peasants, "bless the useful light"; but unhappily it so soon ends in darkness, foul choking smoke; and is kicked into the gutters, a nameless imbroglia of charred staves, pitch-cinders and *vomissement du diable*!

But indeed, from of old, Johnson has enjoyed all or nearly all that Fame can yield any man: the respect, the obedience of those that are about him and inferior to him; of those whose opinion alone can have any forcible impression on him. A little circle gathers round the Wise man; which gradually enlarges as the report thereof spreads, and more can come to see, and to believe; for Wisdom is precious, and of irresistible attraction to all. "An inspired-idiot", Goldsmith, hangs strangely about him; though, as Hawkins says, "he loved not Johnson, but rather envied him for his parts; and once entreated a friend to desist from praising him, 'for in doing so,' said he, 'you harrow up my very

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soul!" Yet, on the whole, there is no evil in the "gooseberry-fool"; but rather much good; of a finer, if of a weaker, sort than Johnson's; and all the more genuine that he himself could never become *conscious* of it,—though unhappily never cease *attempting* to become so: the Author of the genuine *Vicar of Wakefield*, nill he, will he, must needs fly towards such a mass of genuine Manhood; and Dr. Minor keep gyrating round Dr. Major, alternately attracted and repelled. Then there is the chivalrous Topham Beauclerk, with his sharp wit, and gallant courtly ways: there is Bennet Langton, an orthodox gentleman, and worthy; though Johnson once laughed, louder almost than mortal, at his last will and testament; and "could not stop his merriment, but continued it all the way till he got without the Temple-gate; then burst into such a fit of laughter that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion; and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts at the side of the foot-pavement, and sent forth peals so loud that, in the silence of the night, his voice seemed to resound from Temple-bar to Fleet-ditch"! Lastly comes his solid-thinking, solid-feeding Thrale, the well-beloved man; with *Thralia*, a bright papilionaceous creature, whom the elephant loved to play with, and wave to and fro upon his trunk. Not to speak of a reverent Bozzy, for what need is there farther?—Or of the spiritual Luminaries, with tongue or pen, who made that age remarkable; or of Highland Lairds

drinking, in fierce usquebaugh, "Your health, Doctor Shonson!"—Still less of many such, as that poor "Mr. F. Lewis", older in date, of whose birth, death and whole terrestrial *res gestæ*, this only, and strange enough this actually, survives: "Sir, he lived in London, and hung loose upon society!" *Stat Parvi nominis umbra*.—

In his fifty-third year, he is beneficed, by the royal bounty, with a Pension of three hundred pounds. Loud clamour is always more or less insane: but probably the insanest of all loud clamours in the eighteenth century was this that was raised about Johnson's Pension. Men seem to be led by the noses: but in reality, it is by the ears,—as some ancient slaves were, who had their ears bored; or as some modern quadrupeds may be, whose ears are long. Very falsely was it said, "Names do not change Things". Names do change Things; nay for most part they are the only substance, which mankind can discern in Things. The whole sum that Johnson, during the remaining twenty-two years of his life, drew from the public funds of England, would have supported some Supreme Priest for about half as many weeks; it amounts very nearly to the revenue of our poorest Church-Overseer for one twelvemonth. Of secular Administrators of Provinces, and Horse-subduers, and Game-destroyers, we shall not so much as speak: but who were the Primates of England, and the Primates of all England, during Johnson's days? No

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man has remembered. Again, is the Primate of all England something, or is he nothing? If something, then what but the man who, in the supreme degree, teaches and spiritually edifies, and leads towards Heaven by guiding wisely through the Earth, the living souls that inhabit England? We touch here upon deep matters; which but remotely concern us, and might lead us into still deeper: clear, in the mean while, it is that the true Spiritual Edifier and Soul's-Father of all England was, and till very lately continued to be, the man named Samuel Johnson,—whom this scot-and-lot-paying world cackled reproachfully to see remunerated like a Supervisor of Excise!

If Destiny had beaten hard on poor Samuel, and did never cease to visit him too roughly, yet the last section of his Life might be pronounced victorious, and on the whole happy. He was not idle; but now no longer goaded on by want; the light which had shone irradiating the dark haunts of Poverty, now illuminates the circles of Wealth, of a certain culture and elegant intelligence; he who had once been admitted to speak with Edmund Cave and Tobacco Browne, now admits a Reynolds and a Burke to speak with him. Loving friends are there; Listeners, even Answerers: the fruit of his long labours lies round him in fair legible Writings, of Philosophy, Eloquence, Morality, Philology; some excellent, all worthy and genuine Works; for which too, a deep, earnest murmur of thanks reaches him from all ends of his Father-

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land. Nay there are works of Goodness, of undying Mercy, which even he has possessed the power to do: "What I gave I have; what I spent I had!" Early friends had long sunk into the grave; yet in his soul they ever lived, fresh and clear, with soft pious breathings towards them, not without a still hope of one day meeting them again in purer union. Such was Johnson's Life: the victorious Battle of a free, true Man. Finally he died the death of the free and true: a dark cloud of Death, solemn and not untinged with haloes of immortal Hope, "took him away", and our eyes could no longer behold him; but can still behold the trace and impress of his courageous, honest spirit, deep-legible in the World's Business, wheresoever he walked and was.

To estimate the quantity of Work that Johnson performed, how much poorer the World were had it wanted him, can, as in all such cases, never be accurately done; cannot, till after some longer space, be approximately done. All work is as seed sown; it grows and spreads, and sows itself anew, and so, in endless palin-genesia, lives and works. To Johnson's Writings, good and solid, and still profitable as they are, we have already rated his Life and Conversation as superior. By the one and by the other, we shall compute what effects have been produced, and are still, and into deep Time, producing?

So much, however, we can already see: It is now some three quarters of a century that Johnson has been the Prophet of the English;



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the man by whose light the English people, in public and in private, more than by any other man's, have guided their existence. Higher light than that immediately *practical* one; higher virtue than an honest PRUDENCE, he could not then communicate; nor perhaps could they have received: such light, such virtue, however, he did communicate. How to thread this labyrinthic Time, the fallen and falling Ruin of Times; to silence vain Scruples, hold firm to the last the fragments of old Belief, and with earnest eye still discern some glimpses of a true path, and go forward thereon, "in a world where there is much to be done, and little to be known": this is what Samuel Johnson, by act and word, taught his nation; what his nation received and learned of him, more than of any other. We can view him as the preserver and transmitter of whatsoever was genuine in the spirit of Toryism; which genuine spirit, it is now becoming manifest, must again embody itself in all new forms of Society, be what they may, that are to exist, and have continuance—elsewhere than on Paper. The *last* in many things, Johnson was the last genuine Tory; the last of Englishmen who, with strong voice and wholly-believing heart, preached the Doctrine of Standing still; who, without selfishness or slavishness, revered the existing Powers, and could assert the privileges of rank, though himself poor, neglected and plebeian; who had heart-devoutness with heart-hatred of cant, was orthodox-religious with his eyes open;

and in all things and everywhere spoke out in plain English, from a soul wherein jesuitism could find no harbour, and with the front and tone not of a diplomatist but of a man.

This last of the Tories was Johnson: not Burke, as is often said; Burke was essentially a Whig, and only, on reaching the verge of the chasm towards which Whiggism from the first was inevitably leading, recoiled; and, like a man vehement rather than earnest, a resplendent far-sighted Rhetorician rather than a deep sure Thinker, recoiled with no measure, convulsively, and damaging what he drove back with him.

In a world which exists by the balance of Antagonisms, the respective merit of the Conservator and the Innovator must ever remain debatable. Great, in the mean while, and undoubted for both sides, is the merit of him who, in a day of Change, walks wisely, honestly. Johnson's aim was in itself an impossible one: this of stemming the eternal Flood of Time; of clutching all things, and anchoring them down, and saying, Move not!—how could it, or should it, ever have success? The strongest man can but retard the current partially and for a short hour. Yet even in such shortest retardation, may not an inestimable value lie? If England has escaped the blood-bath of a French Revolution; and may yet, in virtue of this delay and of the experience it has given, work out her deliverance calmly into a new Era, let Samuel Johnson, beyond all contemporary or succeeding men,

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have the praise for it. We said above that he was appointed to be Ruler of the British Nation for a season: whoso will look beyond the surface, into the heart of the world's movements, may find that all Pitt Administrations, and Continental Subsidies, and Waterloo victories, rested on the possibility of making England, yet a little while, *Toryish*, Loyal to the Old; and this again on the anterior reality, that the Wise had found such Loyalty still practicable, and recommendable. England had its Hume, as France had its Voltaires and Diderots; but the Johnson was peculiar to us.

If we ask now, by what endowment it mainly was that Johnson realised such a Life for himself and others; what quality of character the main phenomena of his Life may be most naturally deduced from, and his other qualities most naturally subordinated to, in our conception of him, perhaps the answer were: The quality of Courage, of Valour; that Johnson was a Brave Man. The Courage that can go forth, once and away, to Chalk-Farm, and have itself shot, and snuffed out, with decency, is nowise wholly what we mean here. Such courage we indeed esteem an exceeding small matter; capable of coexisting with a life full of falsehood, feebleness, poltroonery and despicability. Nay oftener it is Cowardice rather that produces the result: for consider, Is the Chalk-Farm Pistoleer inspired with any reasonable Belief and Determination; or is he hounded-on by haggard

indefinable Fear,—how he will be *cut* at public  
 places, and “plucked geese of the neighbour-  
 hood” will wag their tongues at him a plucked  
 goose? If he go then, and be shot without  
 shrieking or audible uproar, it is well for him;  
 nevertheless there is nothing amazing in it.  
 Courage to manage all this has not perhaps  
 been denied to any man, or to any woman.  
 Thus, do not recruiting sergeants drum through  
 the streets of manufacturing towns, and collect  
 ragged losels enough; every one of whom,  
 if once dressed in red, and trained a little,  
 will receive fire cheerfully for the small sum  
 of one shilling *per diem*, and have the soul  
 blown out of him at last, with perfect pro-  
 priety. The Courage that dares only *die*, is on  
 the whole no sublime affair; necessary indeed,  
 yet universal; pitiful when it begins to parade  
 itself. On this Globe of ours, there are some  
 thirty-six persons that manifest it, seldom  
 with the smallest failure, during every second  
 of time. Nay look at Newgate: do not the  
 offscourings of Creation, when condemned  
 to the gallows as if they were not men but  
 vermin, walk thither with decency, and even  
 to the scowls and hootings of the whole Uni-  
 verse give their stern good-night in silence?  
 What is to be undergone only once, we may  
 undergo; what must be, comes almost of its  
 own accord. Considered as Duellist, what  
 a poor figure does the fiercest Irish Whisker-  
 ando make, compared with any English Game-  
 cock, such as you may buy for fifteenpence!  
 The Courage we desire and prize is not

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along. The thing that is given him to do, he can make himself do; what is to be endured, he can endure in silence.

How the great soul of old Samuel, consuming daily his own bitter unalleviable allotment of misery and toil, shows beside the poor flimsy little soul of young Boswell; one day haunting in the ring of vanity, tarrying by the wine-cup and crying, Aha, the wine is red; the next day deploring his downpressed, night-shaded, quite poor estate, and thinking it unkind that the whole movement of the Universe should go on, while his digestive-apparatus had stopped! We reckon Johnson's "talent of silence" to be among his great and too rare gifts. Where there is nothing farther to be done, there shall nothing farther be said: like his own poor blind Welshwoman, he accomplished somewhat, and also "endured fifty years of wretchedness with unshaken fortitude". How grim was Life to him; a sick Prison-house and Doubting-castle! "His great business", he would profess, "was to escape from himself". Yet towards all this he has taken his position and resolution; can dismiss it all "with frigid indifference, having little to hope or to fear". Friends are stupid, and pusillanimous, and parsimonious; "wearied of his stay, yet offended at his departure": it is the manner of the world. "By popular delusion," remarks he with a gigantic calmness, "illiterate writers will rise into renown": it is portion of the History of English Literature; a perennial

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thing, this same popular delusion; and will—alter the character of the Language.

Closely connected with this quality of Valour, partly as springing from it, partly as protected by it, are the more recognisable qualities of Truthfulness in word and thought, and Honesty in action. There is a reciprocity of influence here: for as the realising of Truthfulness and Honesty is the life-light and great aim of Valour, so without Valour they cannot, in anywise, be realised. Now, in spite of all practical shortcomings, no one that sees into the significance of Johnson, will say that his prime object was not Truth. In conversation, doubtless, you may observe him, on occasion, fighting as if for victory;—and must pardon these ebulliences of a careless hour, which were not without temptation and provocation. Remark likewise two things: that such prize-arguings were ever on merely superficial debatable questions; and then that they were argued generally by the fair laws of battle and logic-fence, by one cunning in that same. If their purpose was excusable, their effect was harmless, perhaps beneficial: that of taming noisy mediocrity, and showing it another side of a debatable matter; to see *both* sides of which was, for the first time, to see the Truth of it. In his Writings themselves are errors enough, crabbed prepossessions enough, yet these also of a quite extraneous and accidental nature; nowhere a wilful shutting of the eyes to the Truth. Nay, is there not everywhere a heartfelt dis-

cernment, singular, almost admirable, if we consider through what confused conflicting lights and hallucinations it had to be attained, of the highest everlasting Truth, and beginning and even in the age of Wilkes and Whitefield, a Revelation of God to man; and lives, moves and has his being in Truth only; is either true, or, in strict speech, *is* not at all?

Quite spotless, on the other hand, is Johnson's love of Truth, if we look at it as expressed in Practice, as what we have named Honesty of action. "Clear your mind of cant"; *clear* it, throw Cant utterly away: such was his emphatic, repeated precept; and did not he himself faithfully conform to it? The Life of this man has been, as it were, turned inside out, and examined with microscopes by friend and foe; yet was there no Lie found in him. His Doings and Writings are not *shows* but *performances*: you may weigh them in the balance, and they will stand weight. Not a line, not a sentence is dishonestly done, is other than it pretends to be. Alas! and he wrote not out of inward inspiration, but to earn his wages: and with that grand perennial tide of "popular delusion" flowing by; in whose waters he nevertheless refused to fish, to whose rich oyster-beds the dive was too muddy for him. Observe, again, with what innate hatred of Cant, he takes for himself, and offers to others, the lowest possible view of his business, which he followed with such nobleness. Motive for writing he had none, as he often said, but

money; and yet he wrote *so*. Into the region of Poetic Art he indeed never rose; there was no *ideal* without him avowing itself in his work: the nobler was that unavowed *ideal* which lay within him, and commanded saying, Work out thy Artisan-ship in the spirit of an Artist! They who talk loudest about the dignity of Art, and fancy that they too are Artistic guild-brethren, and of the Celestials,—let them consider well what manner of man this was, who felt himself to be only a hired day-labourer. A labourer that was worthy of his hire; that has laboured not as an eye-servant, but as one found faithful! Neither was Johnson in those days perhaps wholly a unique. Time was when, for money, you might have ware: and needed not, in all departments, in that of the Epic Poem, in that of the Blackingbottle, to rest content with the mere *persuasion* that you had ware. It was a happier time. But as yet the seventh Apocalyptic Bladder (of PUFFERY) had not been rent open,—to whirl and grind, as in a West-Indian Tornado, all earthly trades and things into wreck, and dust, and consummation,—and regeneration. Be it quickly, since it must be!—

That Mercy can dwell only with Valour, is an old sentiment or proposition; which, in Johnson, again receives confirmation. Few men on record have had a more merciful, tenderly affectionate nature than old Samuel. He was called the Bear; and did indeed too often look, and roar, like one; being forced to it in his own defence: yet within that shaggy



exterior of his there beat a heart warm as a mother's, soft as a little child's. Nay generally, his very roaring was but the anger of affection: the rage of a Bear, if you will; but of a Bear bereaved of her whelps. Touch his Religion, glance at the Church of England, or the Divine Right; and he was upon you! These things were his Symbols of all that was good and precious for men; his very Ark of the Covenant: whoso laid hand on them tore asunder his heart of hearts. Not out of hatred to the opponent, but of love to the thing opposed, did Johnson grow cruel, fiercely contradictory: this is an important distinction; never to be forgotten in our censure of his conversational outrages. But observe also with what humanity, what openness of love, he can attach himself to all things: to a blind old woman, to a Doctor Levet, to a Cat "Hodge". "His thoughts in the latter part of his life were frequently employed on his deceased friends; he often muttered these or such like sentences: 'Poor man! and then he died.'" How he patiently converts his poor home into a Lazaretto; endures, for long years, the contradiction of the miserable and unreasonable; with him-unconnected, save that they had no other to yield them refuge! Generous old man! Worldly possession he has little; yet of this he gives freely; from his own hard-earned shilling, the half-pence for the poor, that "waited the coming out", are not withheld: the poor "waited the coming out" of one not quite so poor! A Sterne can write sentimentalities on Dead

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Asses: Johnson has a rough voice: but he finds the wretched Daughter of Vice fallen down in the streets; carries her home on his own shoulders, and like a good Samaritan gives help to the help-needing, worthy or unworthy. Ought not Charity, even in that sense, to cover a multitude of sins? No Penny-a-week Committee-Lady, no manager of Soup-Kitchens, dancer at Charity-Balls, was this rugged, stern-visaged man: but where, in all England, could there have been found another soul so full of Pity, a hand so heavenlike bounteous as his? The widow's mite, we know, was greater than all the other gifts.

Perhaps it is this divine feeling of Affection, throughout manifested, that principally attracts us towards Johnson. A true brother of men is he; and filial lover of the Earth; who, with little bright spots of Attachment, "where lives and works some loved one", has beautified "this rough solitary Earth into a peopled garden". Lichfield, with its mostly dull and limited inhabitants, is to the last one of the sunny islets for him: *Salve magna parens!* Or read those Letters on his Mother's death: what a genuine solemn grief and pity lies recorded there; a looking back into the Past, unspeakably mournful, unspeakably tender. And yet calm, sublime; for he must now act, not look: his venerated Mother has been taken from him; but he must now write a *Rasselas* to defray her funeral! Again in this little incident, recorded in his Book of Devotion, are not the tones of Sacred Sorrow and Greatness deeper

than in many a blank-verse Tragedy;—as, indeed, “the fifth act of a Tragedy”, though unhymed, does “lie in every death-bed, were it a peasant’s, and of straw” :

“Sunday, October 18, 1767. Yesterday, at about ten in the morning, I took my leave forever of my dear old friend, Catherine Chambers, who came to live with my mother about 1724, and has been but little parted from us since. She buried my father, my brother and my mother. She is now fifty-eight years old.

“I desired all to withdraw; then told her that we were to part forever; that as Christians, we should part with prayer; and that I would, if she was willing, say a short prayer beside her. She expressed great desire to hear me; and held up her poor hands as she lay in bed, with great fervour, while I prayed kneeling by her. . . .

“I then kissed her. She told me that to part was the greatest pain she had ever felt, and that she hoped we should meet again in a better place. I expressed, with swelled eyes and great emotion of tenderness, the same hopes. We kissed and parted; I humbly hope, to meet again, and to part no more.”

Tears trickling down the granite rock : a soft well of Pity springs within !—Still more tragical is this other scene : “Johnson mentioned that he could not in general accuse himself of having been an undutiful son. ‘Once, indeed,’ said he, ‘I was disobedient : I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago I desired to atone for this fault.’” But by what method ?—What method was now possible ? Hear it ;

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the words are again given as his own, though here evidently by a less capable reporter :

"Madam, I beg your pardon for the abruptness of my departure in the morning, but I was compelled to it by conscience. Fifty years ago, Madam, on this day, I committed a breach of filial piety. My father had been in the habit of attending Uttoxeter market, and opening a stall there for the sale of his Books. Confined by indisposition, he desired me, that day, to go and attend the stall in his place. My pride prevented me; I gave my father a refusal.—And now today I have been at Uttoxeter; I went into the market, at the time of business, uncovered my head, and stood with it bare, for an hour, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory."

Who does not figure to himself this spectacle, amid the "rainy weather, and the sneers", or wonder, "of the bystanders"? The memory of old Michael Johnson, rising from the far distance; sad-beckoning in the "moonlight of memory": how he had toiled faithfully hither and thither; patiently among the lowest of the low; been buffeted and beaten down, yet ever risen again, ever tried it anew—And oh! when the wearied old man, as Bookseller, or Hawker, or Tinker, or whatsoever it was that Fate had reduced him to, begged help of *thee* for one day,—how savage, diabolic, was that mean Vanity, which answered, No! He sleeps now; after life's fitful fever, he sleeps: but thou, O Merciless, how now wilt thou still the sting of that remembrance?—The picture of Samuel

Johnson standing bareheaded in the market there, is one of the grandest and saddest we can paint. Repentance! Repentance! he proclaims, as with passionate sobs: but only to the ear of Heaven, if Heaven will give him audience: the earthly ear and heart, that should have heard it, are now closed, unresponsive forever.

That this so keen-loving, soft-trembling Affectionateness, the inmost essence of his being, must have looked forth, in one form or another, through Johnson's whole character, practical and intellectual, modifying both, is not to be doubted. Yet through what singular distortions and superstitions, moping melancholies, blind habits, whims about "entering with the right foot", and "touching every post as he walked along"; and all the other mad chaotic lumber of a brain that, with sun-clear intellect, hovered forever on the verge of insanity,—must that same inmost essence have looked forth; unrecognisable to all but the most observant! Accordingly it was not recognised; Johnson passed not for a fine nature, but for a dull, almost brutal one. Might not, for example, the first-fruit of such a Loveliness, coupled with his quick Insight, have been expected to be a peculiarly courteous demeanour as man among men? In Johnson's "Politeness", which he often, to the wonder of some, asserted to be great, there was indeed somewhat that needed explanation. Nevertheless, if he insisted always on handing lady-visitors to their carriage; though with the

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certainty of collecting a mob of gazers in Fleet Street,—as might well be, the beau having on, by way of court-dress, “his rusty brown morning suit, a pair of old shoes for slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose”:—in all this we can see the spirit of true Politeness, only shining through a strange medium. Thus again, in his apartments, at one time, there were unfortunately no chairs. “A gentleman who frequently visited him whilst writing his *Idlers*, constantly found him at his desk, sitting on one with three legs; and on rising from it, he remarked that Johnson never forgot its defect; but would either hold it in his hand, or place it with great composure against some support; taking no notice of its imperfection to his visitor”,—who meanwhile, we suppose, sat upon folios, or in the sartorial fashion. “It was remarkable in Johnson,” continues Miss Reynolds (*Renny dear*), “that no external circumstances ever prompted him to make any apology, or to seem even sensible of their existence. Whether this was the effect of philosophic pride, or of some partial notion of his respecting high-breeding, is doubtful.” That it *was*, for one thing, the effect of genuine Politeness, is nowise doubtful. Not of the Pharisaical Brummellean Politeness, which would suffer crucifixion rather than ask twice for soup: but the noble universal Politeness of a man, that knows the dignity of men, and feels his own; such as may be seen in the

paternal bearing of an Indian Sachem; such as Johnson himself exhibited, when a sudden chance brought him into dialogue with his King. To us, with our view of the man, it nowise appears "strange" that he should have boasted himself cunning in the laws of Politeness; nor "stranger still", habitually attentive to practise them.

More legibly is this influence of the Loving heart to be traced in his intellectual character. What, indeed, is the beginning of intellect, the first inducement to the exercise thereof, but attraction towards somewhat, *affection* for it? Thus too, who ever saw, or will see, any true talent, not to speak of genius, the foundation of which is not goodness, love? From Johnson's strength of affection, we deduce many of his intellectual peculiarities; especially that threatening array of perversions, known under the name of "Johnson's Prejudices". Looking well into the root from which these sprang, we have long ceased to view them with hostility, can pardon and reverently pity them. Consider with what force early-imbibed opinions must have clung to a soul of this Affection. Those evil-famed Prejudices of his, that Jacobitism, Church-of-Englandism, hatred of the Scotch, belief in Witches, and such like, what were they but the ordinary beliefs of well-doing, well-meaning provincial Englishmen in that day? First gathered by his Father's hearth; round the kind "country fires" of native Staffordshire; they grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength: they were

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hallowed by fondest sacred recollections; to part with them was parting with his heart's blood. If the man who has no strength of Affection, strength of Belief, have no strength of Prejudice, let him thank Heaven for it, but to himself take small thanks.

Melancholy it was, indeed, that the noble Johnson could not work himself loose from these adhesions; that he could only purify them, and wear them with some nobleness. Yet let us understand how they grew out from the very centre of his being: nay moreover, how they came to cohere in him with what formed the business and worth of his Life, the sum of his whole Spiritual Endeavour. For it is on the same ground that he became throughout an Edifier and Repairer, not, as the others of his make were, a Puller-down; that in an age of universal Scepticism, England was still to produce its Believer. Mark too his candour even here; while a Dr. Adams, with placid surprise, asks, "Have we not evidence enough of the soul's immortality?" Johnson answers, "I wish for more". But the truth is, in Prejudice, as in all things, Johnson was the product of England; one of those *good* yeomen whose limbs were made in England: alas, the last of *such* Invincibles, their day being now done! His culture is wholly English; that not of a Thinker but of a "Scholar": his interests are wholly English; he sees and knows nothing but England; he is the John Bull of Spiritual Europe: let him live, love him, as he was and could not but be! Pitiable



it is, no doubt, that a Samuel Johnson must confute Hume's irreligious Philosophy by some "story from a Clergyman of the Bishopric of Durham"; should see nothing in the great Frederick but "Voltaire's Jacky"; in Voltaire himself but a man *acerrimi ingenii, paucarum litterarum*; in Rousseau but one worthy to be hanged; and in the universal, long-prepared, inevitable Tendency of European Thought but a green-sick milkmaid's crotchet of, for variety's sake, "milkling the Bull". Our good, dear John! Observe too what it is that he sees in the city of Paris: no feeblest glimpse of those D'Alemberts and Diderots, or of the strange questionable work they did; solely some Benedictine Priests, to talk kitchen-latin with them about *Editiones Principes*. "*Monsieur Nong-tong-paw!*"—Our dear, foolish John: yet is there a lion's heart within him!—Pitiable all these things were, we say; yet nowise inexcusable; nay, as basis or as foil to much else that was in Johnson, almost venerable. Ought we not, indeed, to honour England, and English Institutions and Way of Life, that they could still equip such a man; could furnish him in heart and head to be a Samuel Johnson, and yet to love them, and unyieldingly fight for them? What truth and living vigour must such Institutions once have had, when, in the middle of the Eighteenth Century, there was still enough left in them for this!

It is worthy of note that, in our little British Isle, the two grand Antagonisms of Europe should have stood embodied, under

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their very highest concentration, in two men produced simultaneously among ourselves. Samuel Johnson and David Hume, as was observed, were children nearly of the same year: through life they were spectators of the same life-movement; often inhabitants of the same city. Greater contrast, in all things, between two great men, could not be. Hume, well-born, competently provided for, whole in body and mind, of his own determination forces a way into Literature: Johnson, poor, moonstruck, diseased, forlorn, is forced into it "with the bayonet of necessity at his back". And what a part did they severally play there! As Johnson became the father of all succeeding Tories; so was Hume the father of all succeeding Whigs, for his own Jacobitism was but an accident, as worthy to be named Prejudice as any of Johnson's. Again, if Johnson's culture was exclusively English; Hume's, in Scotland, became European;—for which reason too we find his influence spread deeply over all quarters of Europe, traceable deeply in all speculation, French, German, as well as domestic; while Johnson's name, out of England, is hardly anywhere to be met with. In spiritual stature they are almost equal; both great, among the greatest: yet how unlike in likeness! Hume has the widest, methodising, comprehensive eye; Johnson the keenest for perspicacity and minute detail: so had, perhaps chiefly, their education ordered it. Neither of the two rose into Poetry; yet both to some approximation thereof: Hume to something of

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an Epic clearness and method, as in his delineation of the Commonwealth Wars; Johnson to many a deep Lyric tone of plainness and impetuous graceful power, scattered over his fugitive compositions. Both, rather to the general surprise, had a certain rugged Humour shining through their earnestness: the indication, indeed, that they were earnest men, and had *subdued* their wild world into a kind of temporary home and safe dwelling. Both were, by principle and habit, Stoics: yet Johnson with the greater merit, for he alone had very much to triumph over; farther, he alone enriched his Stoicism into Devotion. To Johnson Life was as a Prison, to be endured with heroic faith: to Hume it was little more than a foolish Bartholomew-Fair Show-booth, with the foolish crowdings and elbowings of which it was not worth while to quarrel; the whole would break up, and be at liberty, so soon. Both realised the highest task of Manhood, that of living like men; each died not untried, in his way: Hume as one, with factious, half-false gaiety, taking leave of what was itself wholly but a Lie: Johnson as one, with awe-struck, yet resolute and piously expectant heart, taking leave of a Reality, to enter a Reality still higher. Johnson had the harder problem of it, from first to last: whether, with some hesitation, we can admit that he was intrinsically the better-gifted, may remain undecided. These two men now rest; the one in Westminster Abbey here; the other in the Calton-Hill Churchyard of Edinburgh. Through Life

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they did not meet: as contrasts, "like in unlike", love each other; so might they two have loved, and communed kindly,—had not the terrestrial dross and darkness, that was in them, withstood! One day, their spirits, what truth was in each, will be found working, living in harmony and free union, even here below. They were the two half-men of their time: whose should combine the intrepid Candour and decisive scientific Clearness of Hume, with the Reverence, the Love and devout Humility of Johnson, were the whole man of a new time. Till such whole man arrive for us, and the distracted time admit of such, might the Heavens but bless poor England with half-men worthy to tie the shoe-latchets of these, resembling these even from afar! Be both attentively regarded, let the true Effort of both prosper;—and for the present, both take our affectionate farewell!



# Sir Walter Scott

[1838]

American Cooper asserts, in one of his books, that there is "an instinctive tendency in men to look at any man who has become distinguished". True, surely: as all observation and survey of mankind, from China to Peru, from Nebuchadnezzar to Old Hickory, will testify! Why do men crowd towards the improved-drop at Newgate, eager to catch a sight? The man about to be hanged is in a distinguished situation. Men crowd to such extent, that Greenacre's is not the only life choked-out there. Again, ask of these leathern vehicles, cabriolets, neat-flies, with blue men and women in them, that scour all thoroughfares, Whither so fast? To see dear Mrs. Rigmarole, the distinguished female; great Mr. Rigmarole, the distinguished male! Or, consider that crowning phenomenon, and summary of modern civilisation, a *soirée* of lions. Glittering are the rooms, well-lighted, thronged; bright flows their undulatory flood of blonde-gowns and dress-coats, a soft smile dwelling on all faces; for behold there also flow the lions, hovering distinguished: oracles of the age, of one sort or another. Oracles really pleasant to see; whom it is worth while

to go and see: look at them, but inquire not of them, depart rather and be thankful. For your *lion-soirée* admits not of speech; there lies the speciality of it. A meeting together of human creatures; and yet (so high has civilisation gone) the primary aim of human meeting, that soul might in some articulate utterance unfold itself to soul, can be dispensed with in it. Utterance there is not; nay there is a certain grinning play of tongue-fence, and make-believe of utterance, considerably worse than none. For which reason it has been suggested, with an eye to sincerity and silence in such *lion-soirées*, Might not each lion be, for example, ticketed, as wine-decanter are? Let him carry, slung round him, in such ornamental manner as seemed good, his silver label with name engraved; you lift this label, and read it, with what farther ocular survey you find useful, and speech is not needed at all. O Fenimore Cooper, it is most true there is "an instinctive tendency in men to look at any man that has become distinguished"; and, moreover, an instinctive desire in men to become distinguished and be looked at!

For the rest, we will call it a most valuable tendency this; indispensable to mankind. Without it, where were star-and-garter, and significance of rank; where were all ambition, money-getting, respectability of gig or no gig; and, in a word, the main impetus by which it society moves, the main force by which it hangs together? A tendency, we say, of

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manifold results; of manifold origin, not ridiculous only, but sublime;—which some incline to deduce from the mere gregarious purblind nature of man, prompting him to run, “as dim-eyed animals do, towards any glittering object, were it but a scoured tankard, and mistake it for a solar luminary”, or even “sheep-like, to run and crowd because many *have* already run”! It is, indeed, curious to consider how men do make the gods that themselves worship. For the most famed man, round whom all the world rapturously huzzahs and venerates, as if his like were not, is the same man whom all the world was wont to jostle into the kennels; not a changed man, but in every fibre of him the same man. Foolish world, what went ye out to see? A tankard scoured bright: and do there not lie, of the self-same pewter, whole barrowfuls of tankards, though by worse fortune all still in the dim state?

And yet, at bottom, it is not merely our gregarious sheep-like quality, but something better, and indeed best: what has been called “the perpetual fact of hero-worship”; our inborn sincere love of great men! Not the gilt farthing, for its own sake, do even fools covet; but the gold guinea which they mistake it for. Veneration of great men is perennial in the nature of man; this, in all times, especially in these, is one of the blesseddest facts predicable of him. In all times, even in these seemingly so disobedient times, “it remains a blessed fact, so cunningly has Nature



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ordered it, *that whatsoever man ought to obey, he cannot but obey*. Show the dullest clodpole, show the haughtiest featherhead, that a soul higher than himself is actually here; were his knees stiffened into brass, he must down and worship." So it has been written; and may be cited and repeated till known to all. Understand it well, this of "hero-worship" was the primary creed, and has intrinsically been the secondary and ternary, and will be the ultimate and final creed of mankind; indestructible, changing in shape, but in essence unchangeable; whereon politics, religions, loyalties, and all highest human interests have been and can be built, as on a rock that will endure while man endures. Such is hero-worship; so much lies in that our inborn sincere love of great men!—In favour of which unspeakable benefits of the reality, what can we do but cheerfully pardon the multiplex ineptitudes of the semblance; cheerfully wish even *lion-soi-dis*, with labels for their lions or without that improvement, all manner of prosperity? Let hero-worship flourish, say we; and the more and more assiduous chase after gilt farthings while guineas are not yet forthcoming. Herein, at lowest, is proof that guineas exist, that they are believed to exist, and valued. Find great men if you can; if you cannot, still quit not the search; in defect of great men, let there be noted men, in such number, to such degree of intensity as the public appetite can tolerate.

Whether Sir Walter Scott was a great man,

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is still a question with some; but there can be no question with any one that he was a most noted and even notable man. In this generation there was no literary man with such a popularity in any country; there have only been a few with such, taking-in all generations and all countries. Nay, it is farther to be admitted that Sir Walter Scott's popularity was of a select sort rather; not a popularity of the populace. His admirers were at one time almost all the intelligent of civilised countries; and to the last, included and do still include a great portion of that sort. Such fortune he had, and has continued to maintain for a space of some twenty or thirty years. So long the observed of all observers; a great man, or only a considerable man; here surely, if ever, is a singularly circumstanced, is a "distinguished" man! In regard to whom, therefore, the "instinctive tendency" on other men's part cannot be wanting. Let men look, where the world has already so long looked. And now, while the new, earnestly expected *Life* "by his son-in-law and literary executor" again summons the whole world's attention round him, probably for the last time it will ever be so summoned; and men are in some sort taking leave of a notability, and about to go their way, and commit him to his fortune on the flood of things,—why should not this Periodical Publication likewise publish its thought about him? Readers of miscellaneous aspect, of unknown quantity and quality, are waiting to hear it

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done. With small inward vocation, but cheer-  
fully obedient to destiny and necessity, the  
present reviewer will follow a multitude: to  
do evil or to do no evil, will depend not on  
the multitude but on himself. One thing  
he did decidedly wish; at least to wait till  
Volumes, as the world knows, have flowed  
over into a Seventh, which will not for some  
weeks yet see the light. But the editorial  
powers, wearied with waiting, have become  
peremptory; and declare that, finished or not  
it is best. The physiognomy of Scott will  
not be much altered for us by that Seventh  
Volume; the prior Six have altered it but  
little;—as, indeed, a man who has written  
some two-hundred volumes of his own, and  
lived for thirty years amid the universal speech  
of himself. Be it as the peremptory editorial  
powers require. First, therefore, a word on the *Life* itself.  
Mr. Lockhart's known powers justify strict  
requisition in his case. Our verdict in general  
would be, that he has accomplished the work  
he schemed for himself in a creditable work-  
manlike manner. It is true, his notion of  
being very elevated. To picture-forth the life  
of Scott according to any rules of art or com-  
position, so that a reader, on adequately  
examining it, might say to himself, "There

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is Scott, there is the physiognomy and meaning of Scott's appearance and transit on this earth; such was he by nature, so did the world act on him, so he on the world, with such result and significance for himself and us": this was by no manner of means Mr. Lockhart's plan. A plan which, it is rashly said, should preside over every biography! It might have been fulfilled with all degrees of perfection, from that of the *Odyssey* down to *Thomas Elkwood* or lower. For there is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography, the life of a man: also, it may be said, there is no life of a man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort, rhymed or unrhymed. It is a plan one would prefer, did it otherwise suit; which it does not, in these days. Seven volumes sell so much dearer than one; are so much easier to write than one. The *Odyssey*, for instance, what were the value of the *Odyssey* sold per sheet? One paper of *Pickwick*; or say, the inconsiderable fraction of one. This, in commercial algebra, were the equation: *Odyssey* equal to *Pickwick* divided by an unknown integer.

There is a great discovery still to be made in Literature, that of paying literary men by the quantity they *do not* write. Nay, in sober truth, is not this actually the rule in all writing; and, moreover, in all conduct and acting? Not what stands aboveground, but what lies unseen *under* it, as the root and subterranean element it sprang from and emblemed forth, determines the value. Under all speech that

is good for anything there lies a silence that is better. Silence is deep as Eternity; speech is shallow as Time. Paradoxical does it seem? Woe for the age, woe for the man, quack-ridden, bespeched, despouted, blown about like barren Sahāra, to whom this world-old truth were altogether strange!—Such we say is the rule, acted on or not, recognised or not; and he who departs from it, what can he do but spread himself into breadth and length, into superficiality and saleability; and, except as fligree, become comparatively useless? One thinks, Had but the hogthead of thin wash, which sours in a week ready for the kennels, been *distilled*, been concentrated! Our dear Feni-more Cooper, whom we started with, might, in that way, have given us one *Natty Leatherstocking*, one melodious synopsis of Man and Nature in the West (for it lay in him to do it), almost as a Saint-Pierre did for the Islands of the East; and the hundred Incoherences, cobbled hastily together by order of Colburn and Company, had slumbered in Chaos, as all incoherences ought if possible to do. Verily this same genius of diffuse-writing, of diffuse-acting, is a Moloch; and souls pass through the fire to him, more than enough. Surely, if ever discovery was valuable and needful, it were that above indicated, of paying by the work *not* visibly done!—Which needful discovery we will give the whole projecting, railwaying, knowledge-diffusing, march-of-intellect and otherwise promotive and loco-motive societies in the Old and New World,

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any required length of centuries to make. Once made, such discovery once made, we too will fling cap into the air, and shout, "*Io Pæan! the Devil is conquered*";—and, in the *mean* while, study to think it nothing miraculous that seven biographical volumes are given where one had been better; and that several other things happen, very much as they from of old were known to do, and are like to continue doing.

Mr. Lockhart's aim, we take it, was not that of producing any such highflown work of art as we hint at: or indeed to do much other than to print, intelligibly bound together by order of time, and by some requisite intercalary exposition, all such letters, documents and notices about Scott as he found lying suitable, and as it seemed likely the world would undertake to read. His *Work*, accordingly, is not so much a composition, as what we may call a compilation well done. Neither is this a task of no difficulty; this too is a task that may be performed with extremely various degrees of talent: from the *Life and Correspondence of Hannah More*, for instance, up to this *Life of Scott*, there is a wide range indeed! Let us take the Seven Volumes, and be thankful that they are genuine in their kind. Nay, as to that of their being seven and not one, it is right to say that the public so required it. To have done other, would have shown little policy in an author. Had Mr. Lockhart laboriously compressed himself, and instead of well-done compilation, brought

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out the well-done composition, in one volume instead of seven, which not many men in England are better qualified to do, there can be no doubt but his readers for the time had been immeasurably fewer. If the praise of magnanimity be denied him, that of prudence must be conceded, which perhaps he values more.

The truth is, the work, done in this manner too, was good to have: Scott's Biography, if uncomposed, lies printed and indestructible here, in the elementary state, and can at any time be composed, if necessary, by whosoever has a call to that. As it is, as it was meant to be, we repeat, the work is vigorously done. Sagacity, decision, candour, diligence, good manners, good sense: these qualities are throughout observable. The dates, calculations, statements, we suppose to be all accurate; much laborious inquiry, some of it impossible for another man, has been gone into, the results of which are imparted with due brevity. Scott's letters, not interesting generally, yet never absolutely without interest, are copiously given; copiously, but with selection; the answers to them still more select. Narrative, delineation, and at length personal reminiscences, occasionally of much merit, of a certain rough force, sincerity and picturesqueness, duly intervene. The scattered members of Scott's Life do lie here, and could be disentangled. In a word, this compilation is the work of a manful, clear-seeing, conclusive man, and has been executed with the

faculty and combination of faculties the public had a right to expect from the name attached to it.

One thing we hear greatly blamed in Mr. Lockhart: that he has been too communicative, indiscreet, and has recorded much that ought to have lain suppressed. Persons are mentioned, and circumstances, not always of an ornamental sort. It would appear there is far less reticence than was looked for! Various persons, name and surname, have "received pain": nay the very Hero of the Biography is rendered unheroic; unornamental facts of him, and of those he had to do with, being set forth in plain English: hence "personality", "indiscretion", or worse, "sanctities of private life", &c. &c. How delicate, decent is English Biography, bless its mealy mouth! A Damocles' sword of *Respectability* hangs forever over the poor English Life-writer (as it does over poor English Life in general), and reduces him to the verge of paralysis. Thus it has been said, "there are no English lives worth reading except those of Players, who by the nature of the case have bidden *Respectability* good-day". The English biographer has long felt that if in writing his Man's Biography, he wrote down anything that could by possibility offend any man, he had written wrong. The plain consequence was, that, properly speaking, no biography whatever could be produced. The poor biographer, having the fear *not* of God before his eyes, was obliged to retire as it



him : to delineate a likeness of the earthly pilgrimage of a man. He will compute well what profit is in it, and what disprofit; under which latter head this of offending any of his fellow-creatures will surely not be forgotten. Nay, this may so swell the disprofit side of his account, that many an enterprise of biography, otherwise promising, shall require to be renounced. But once taken up, the rule before all rules is to do *it*, not to do the ghost of it. In speaking of the man and men he has to deal with, he will of course keep all his charities about him; but all his eyes open. Far be it from him to set down aught *untrue*; nay, not to abstain from, and leave in oblivion, much that is true. But having found a thing or things essential for his subject, and well computed the for and against, he will in very deed set down such thing or things, nothing doubting,—*having*, we may say, the fear of God before his eyes, and no other fear whatever. Censure the biographer's prudence; dissent from the computation he made, or agree with it; be all malice of his, be all falsehood, may be all offensive avoidable inaccuracy, condemned and consumed; but know that by this plan only, executed as was possible, could the biographer hope to make a biography; and blame him not that he did what it had been the worst fault not to do.

As to the accuracy or error of these statements about the Ballantynes and other persons aggrieved, which are questions much mooted at present in some places, we know nothing

at all. If they are inaccurate, let them be corrected; if the inaccuracy was avoidable, let the author bear rebuke and punishment for it. We can only say, these things carry no look of inaccuracy on the face of them; neither is anywhere the smallest trace of ill-will or unjust feeling discernible. Decidedly the probabilities are, and till better evidence arise, the fair conclusion is, that this matter stands very much as it ought to do. Let the clatter of censure, therefore, propagate itself as far as it can. For Mr. Lockhart it virtually amounts to this very considerable praise, that, standing full in the face of the public, he has set at naught, and been among the first to do it, a public piece of cant; one of the commonest we have, and closely allied to many others of the fellest sort, as smooth as it looks.

The other censure, of Scott being made unheroic, springs from the same stem; and is, perhaps, a still more wonderful flower of it. Your true hero must have no features, but be white, stainless, an impersonal ghost-hero! But connected with this, there is a hypothesis now current, due probably to some man of name, for its own force would not carry it far: That Mr. Lockhart at heart has a dislike to Scott, and has done his best in an underhand treacherous manner to dishero him! Such hypothesis is actually current: he that has ears may hear it now and then. On which astonishing hypothesis, if a word must be said, it can only be an apology for silence,—“That



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written *Life*; we will glance a little at the man and his acted life.

Into the question whether Scott was a great man or not, we do not propose to enter deeply. It is, as too usual, a question about words. There can be no doubt but many men have been named and printed *great* who were vastly smaller than he: as little doubt moreover that of the specially *good*, a very large portion, according to any genuine standard of man's worth, were worthless in comparison to him. He for whom Scott is great may most innocently name him so; may with advantage admire his great qualities, and ought with sincere heart to emulate them. At the same time, it is good that there be a certain degree of precision in our epithets. It is good to understand, for one thing, that no popularity, and open-mouthed wonder of all the world, continued even for a long series of years, can make a man great. Such popularity is a remarkable fortune; indicates a great adaptation of the man to his element of circumstances; but may or may not indicate anything great in the man. To our imagination, as above hinted, there is a certain apotheosis in it; but in the reality no apotheosis at all. Popularity is as a blaze of illumination, or alas, of conflagration, kindled round a man; *showing* what is in him; not putting the smallest item more into him; often abstracting much from him; conflagrating the poor man himself into ashes and *caput mortuum*! And then, by the nature

of it, such popularity is transient; your "series of years", quite unexpected, sometimes almost all on a sudden, terminates! For the stupidity of men, especially of men congregated in masses round any object, is extreme. What illuminations and conflagrations have kindled themselves, as if new heavenly suns had risen, which proved only to be tar-barrels, and terrestrial locks of straw! Profane Princesses cried out, "One God, one Farinelli!"—and whither now have they and Farinelli danced? In Literature too, there have been seen popularities greater even than Scott's, and nothing perennial in the interior of them. Lope de Vega, whom all the world swore by, and made a proverb of; who could make an acceptable five-act tragedy in almost as many hours; the greatest of all popularities past or present, and perhaps one of the greatest men that ever ranked among popularities: Lope himself, so radiant, far-shining, has not proved to be a sun or star of the firmament; but is as good as lost and gone out; or plays at best, in the eyes of some few, as a vague aurora-borealis, and brilliant ineffectually. The great man of Spain sat obscure at the time, all dark and poor, a maimed soldier; writing his *Don Quixote* in prison. And Lope's fate withal was sad, his popularity perhaps a curse to him; for in this man there was something ethereal too, a divine particle traceable in few other popular men; and such far-shining diffusion of himself, though all the world swore by it, would do nothing

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for the true life of him even while he lived: he had to creep into a convent, into a monk's cowl, and learn, with infinite sorrow, that his blessedness had lain elsewhere; that when a man's life feels itself to be sick and an error, no voting of bystanders can make it well and a truth again. Or coming down to our own times, was not August Kotzebue popular? Kotzebue, not so many years since, saw himself, if rumour and hand-clapping could be credited, the greatest man going; saw visibly his Thoughts, dressed-out in plush and paste-board, permeating and perambulating civilised Europe; the most iron visages weeping with him, in all theatres from Cadiz to Kamtchatka; his own "astonishing genius", meanwhile, producing two tragedies or so per month: he, on the whole, blazed high enough: he too has gone out into Night and *Orcus*, and already is not. We will omit this of popularity altogether; and account it as making simply nothing towards Scott's greatness or non-greatness, as an accident, not a quality.

Shorn of this falsifying *nimbus*, and reduced to his own natural dimensions, there remains the reality, Walter Scott, and what we can find in him: to be accounted great, or not great, according to the dialects of men. Friends to precision of epithet will probably deny his title to the name "great". It seems to us there goes other stuff to the making of great men than can be detected here. One knows not what idea worthy of the name of great, what purpose, instinct or tendency, that could



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acquiesced, and made himself at home in a world of conventionalities; the false, the semi-false and the true were alike true in this, that they were there, and had power in their hands more or less. It was well to feel so; and yet not well! We find it written, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion"; but surely it is a double woe to them that are at ease in Babel, in Domdaniel. On the other hand, he wrote many volumes, amusing many thousands of men. Shall we call this great? It seems to us there dwells and struggles another sort of spirit in the inward parts of great men!

Brother Ringletub, the missionary, inquired of Ram-Dass, a Hindoo man-god, who had set up for godhood lately, What he meant to do, then, with the sins of mankind? To which Ram-Dass at once answered, He had *fire enough in his belly* to burn-up all the sins in the world. Ram-Dass was right so far, and had a spice of sense in him; for surely it is the test of every divine man this same, and without it he is not divine or great,—that he *have* fire in him to burn-up somewhat of the sins of the world, of the miseries and errors of the world: why else is he there? Far be it from us to say that a great man must needs, with benevolence pre-pense, become a "friend of humanity"; nay, that such professional self-conscious friends of humanity are not the fatallest kind of persons to be met with in our day. All greatness is unconscious, or it is little and naught. And yet a great man without *such* fire in him, burning dim or developed, as a divine behest in his



heart of hearts, never resting till it be fulfilled,  
 were a solicism in Nature. A great man is  
 ever, as the Transcendentalists speak, possessed  
 with an *idea*. Napoleon himself, not the super-  
 finest of great men, and ballasted sufficiently  
 with prudences and egoisms, had nevertheless  
 idea that Democracy was the Cause of Man,  
 the right and infinite Cause. Accordingly he  
 made himself "the armed Soldier of Democ-  
 racy"; and did vindicate it in a rather great  
 manner. Nay, to the very last, he had a kind  
 of idea; that, namely, of "*La carrière ouverte*  
 aux talents"; really one of the best ideas yet pro-  
 mulgated on that matter, or rather the one true  
 central idea, towards which all the others, if  
 it was in the military province only that Na-  
 poleon could realize this idea of his, being  
 forced to fight for himself in the civil province  
 got it tried to any extent in the civil province  
 of things, his head by much more than its growth  
 and he lost head, as they say, and became a  
 selfish ambitionist and quack, and was hurled  
 out; leaving his idea to be realised, in the  
 civil province of things, by others! Thus was  
 Napoleon; thus are all great men: children  
 of the idea; or, in Ram-Dass's phraseology,  
 furnished with fire to burn-up the miseries of  
 men. Conscious or unconscious, latent or  
 unfolded, there is small vestige of any such fire  
 being extant in the inner-man of Scott.

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Yet on the other hand, the surliest critic must allow that Scott was a genuine man, which itself is a great matter. No affectation, fantasticality, or distortion, dwelt in him; no shadow of cant. Nay withal, was he not a right brave and strong man, according to his kind? What a load of toil, what a measure of felicity, he quietly bore along with him; with what quiet strength he both worked on this earth, and enjoyed in it; invincible to evil fortune and to good! A most composed invincible man; in difficulty and distress knowing no discouragement, Samson-like carrying off on his strong Samson-shoulders the gates that would imprison him; in danger and menace laughing at the whisper of fear. And then, with such a sunny current of true humour and humanity, a free joyful sympathy with so many things; what of fire he had all lying so beautifully *latent*, as radical latent heat, as fruitful internal warmth of life; a most robust, healthy man! The truth is, our best definition of Scott were perhaps even this, that he was, if no great man, then something much pleasanter to be, a robust, thoroughly healthy and withal very prosperous and victorious man. An eminently well-conditioned man, healthy in body, healthy in soul; we will call him one of the *healthiest* of men. Neither is this a small matter: health is a great matter, both to the possessor of it and to others. On the whole, that humorist in the Moral Essay was not so far out, who determined on honouring health only; and so instead of humbling himself to

the highborn, to the rich and well-dressed, insisted on doffing hat to the healthy: coroneted carriages with pale faces in them passed by as failures, miserable and lamentable; trucks with ruddy-cheeked strength dragging at them were greeted as successful and venerable. For does not health mean harmony, the synonym of all that is true, justly-ordered, good; is it not, in some sense, the net total, as shown by experiment, of whatever worth is in us? The healthy man is a most meritorious product of Nature so far as he goes. A healthy body is good; but a soul in right health,—it is the thing beyond all others to be prayed for; the blesseddest thing this earth receives of Heaven. Without artificial medicament of philosophy, or tight-lacing of creeds (always very questionable), the healthy soul discerns what is good, and adheres to it, and retains it; discerns what is bad, and spontaneously casts it off. An instinct from Nature herself, like that which guides the wild animals of the forest to their food, shows him what he shall do, what he shall abstain from. The false and foreign will not adhere to him; cant and all fantastic diseased incrustations are impossible;—as Walker the *Original*, in such eminence of health was *he* for his part, *could* not, by much abstinence from soap-and-water, attain to a dirty face! This thing thou canst work with and profit by, this thing is substantial and worthy; that other thing thou canst not work with, it is trivial and inapt: so speaks unerringly the inward monitor of the man's whole nature. No need of logic



you will. A healthy nature may or may not be great; but there is no great nature that is not healthy.

Or, on the whole, might we not say, Scott, in the new vesture of the nineteenth century, was intrinsically very much the old fighting Borderer of prior centuries; the kind of man Nature did of old make in that birthland of his? In the saddle, with the foray-spear, he would have acquitted himself as he did at the desk with his pen. One fancies how, in stout *Beardie* of Harden's time, he could have played Beardie's part; and *been* the stalwart buff-belted *terre filius* he in this late time could only delight to draw. The same stout self-help was in him; the same oak and triple brass round his heart. He too could have fought at Redswire, cracking crowns with the fiercest, if that had been the task; could have harried cattle in Tynedale, repaying injury with compound interest; a right sufficient captain of men. A man without qualms or fantasticalities; a hard-headed, sound-hearted man, of joyous robust temper, looking to the main chance, and fighting direct thitherward; *valde staturatus homo*!—How much in that case had slumbered in him, and passed away without sign! But indeed, who knows how much slumbers in many men? Perhaps our greatest poets are the *mute* Miltons; the vocals are those whom by happy accident we lay hold of, one here, one there, as it chances, and *make* vocal. It is even a question, whether, had not want, discomfort and distress-warrants been busy at

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Stratford-on-Avon, Shakspeare himself had not lived killing calves or combing wool! Had the Edial Boarding-school turned out well, we had never heard of Samuel Johnson; Samuel Johnson had been a fat schoolmaster and dogmatic gerundgrinder, and never known that he was more. Nature is rich: those two eggs thou art eating carelessly to breakfast, could they not have been hatched into a pair of fowls, and have covered the whole world with poultry?

But it was not harrying of cattle in Tyndale, or cracking of crowns at Redswire, that this stout Border-chief was appointed to perform. Far other work. To be the song-singer and pleasant tale-teller to Britain and Europe, in the beginning of the artificial nineteenth century; here, and not there, lay his business. Beardie of Harden would have found it very amazing. How he shapes himself along in it, element; how he helps himself to this new makes it too do for him, lives sound and victorious in it, and leads over the marches such a spoil as all the cattle-droves the Hardens ever took were poor in comparison to: this is the history of the life and achievements of our Sir Walter Scott, Baronet;—whereat we are now to glance for a little! It is a thing remarkable; a thing substantial; of joyful, victorious sort: not unworthy to be glanced at. Withal, however, a glance here and there will suffice. Our limits are narrow; the thing, were it never so victorious, is not of the sublime sort, nor extremely edifying: there is nothing in it to censure vehemently, nor love vehemently: there

Till towards the age of thirty, Scott's life through all his preliminary steps, without symptom of renown as yet. It is the life of every other Edinburgh youth of his station and time. Fortunate we must name it, in many ways. Parents in easy or wealthy circumstances, yet unencumbered with the cares and perversions of aristocracy; nothing eminent in place, in faculty or culture, yet nothing deficient; all around is methodic regulation, prudence, prosperity, kind-heartedness; an element of warmth and light, of affection, industry and burgherly comfort, heightened into elegance; in which the young heart can whole-somely grow. A vigorous health seems to have been given by Nature; yet, as if Nature had said withal, "Let it be a health to express itself by mind, not by body", a lameness is added in childhood; the brave little boy, instead of romping and bickering, must learn to think; or at lowest, what is a great matter, to sit still. No rackets and trundling-hoops for this young Walter; but ballads, history-books and a world of legendary stuff, which his mother and those near him are copiously able to furnish. Disease, which is but superficial, and issues in outward lameness, does not cloud the young existence; rather forwards it towards

is more to wonder at than admire; and the whole secret is not an abstruse one.

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the expansion it is fitted for. The miserable disease had been one of the internal nobler parts, marring the general organisation; under which no Walter Scott could have been forwarded, or with all his other endowments could have been producible or possible. "Nature gives healthy children much; how much! Wise education is a wise unfolding of this; often it unfolds itself better of its own accord."

Add one other circumstance: the place where; namely, Presbyterian Scotland. The influences of this are felt incessantly, they stream-in at says La Rochefoucault, "not in speech only, every pore. "There is a country accent," but in thought, conduct, character and manner of existing, which never forsakes a man." Scott, we believe, was all his days an Episcopalian Dissenter in Scotland; but that makes little to the matter. Nobody who knows Scotland and Scott can doubt but Presbyterianism too had a vast share in the forming of him. A country where the entire people is, or even once has been, laid hold of, filled to the heart with an infinite religious idea, has "made a step from which it cannot retrograde". Thought, conscience, the sense that man is denizen of a Universe, creature of an Eternity, has penetrated to the remotest cottage, to the simplest heart. Beautiful and awful, the feeling of a Heavenly Behest, of Duty god-commanded, over-canopies all life. There is an inspiration in such a people: one may say in a more special sense, "the inspiration of the



alertness of faculty, it is still there; it may  
 in the vulgar Scotchman, in the vulgar New  
 form of hard-fisted money-getting industry, as  
 endures there. It may take many forms: the  
 manhood, ready for all work that man can do,  
 tained *majority*; thought, and a certain spiritual  
 form, but cannot go out; the country has at-  
 Thought, in such a country, may change its  
 be made once only, the results are immense.  
 Of such an achievement, we say, were it to

a people to believe him.  
 men! This great message Knox did deliver,  
 with a man's voice and strength; and found  
 fellow-men, not of their own appetites; bu  
 no, in no wise; born slaves neither of thes  
 ornamental) to digest the produce of thes  
 ing machines, not patent-digesters (never so  
 a great message. Not ploughing and hammer-  
 what will last through eternity". It is verily  
 who work in any meanest moment of time  
 men; created by God, responsible to God;  
 compass, was, "Let men know that they are  
 message to men. His message, in its great  
 paratively inconsiderable item in his great  
 is but one, and indeed an inevitable and com-  
 and said, "Let the people be taught": this  
 he sent the schoolmaster forth to all corners,  
 confusion, were still but struggling for life,  
 his cause, amid civil broils, in convulsion and  
 the true! That, in the moment while he and  
 out to brave old Knox, one of the truest of  
 out to all the brave and true; everlasting hon-  
 Almighty giveth them understanding". Hon-

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utter itself, one day, as the colossal Scepticism of a Hume (trickiest this too though painful, wrestling Titan-like through doubt and inquiry towards new belief); and again, some better day, it may utter itself as the inspired Melody of a Burns: in a word, it is there, and continues to manifest itself, in the Voice and the Work of a Nation of hardy endeavouring considering men, with whatever that may bear in it, or unfold from it. The Scotch national character originates in many circumstances; first of all, in the Saxon stuff there was to work on; but next, and beyond all else except that, in the Presbyterian Gospel of John Knox. It seems a good national character; and, on some sides, not so good. Let Scott thank John Knox, for he owed him much, little as he dreamed of debt in that quarter! No Scotchman of his time was more entirely Scotch than Walter Scott: the good and the not so good, which all Scotchmen inherit, ran through every fibre of him.

Scott's childhood, school-days, college-days, are pleasant to read of, though they differ not from those of others in his place and time. The memory of him may probably enough last till this record of them become far more curious than it now is. "So lived an Edinburgh Writer to the Signet's son in the end of the eighteenth century", may some future Scotch novelist say to himself in the end of the twenty-first! The following little fragment of infancy is all we can extract. It is from an Autobiography which he had begun, which



killed for the use of the family, I should be stripped, and swathed-up in the skin warm as it was flayed from the carcass of the animal. In this Tartar-like habiliment I well remember lying upon the floor of the little parlour in the farm-house, while my grandfather, a venerable old man with white hair, used every excitement to make me try to crawl. I also distinctly remember the late Sir George M'Dougal of Mackerstown, father of the present Sir Henry Hay M'Dougal, joining in the attempt. He was, God knows how, a relation of ours; and I still recollect him, in his old-fashioned military habit (he had been Colonel of the Greys), with a small cocked-hat deeply laced, an embroidered scarlet waistcoat, and a light-coloured coat, with milk-white locks tied in a military fashion, kneeling on the ground before me, and dragging his watch along the carpet to induce me to follow it. The benevolent old soldier, and the infant wrapped in his sheepskin, would have afforded an odd group to uninterested spectators. This must have happened about my third year (1774), for Sir George M'Dougal and my grandfather both died shortly after that period."

We will glance next into the "*Liddesdale Raids*". Scott has grown-up to be a brisk-hearted jovial young man and Advocate: in vacation-time he makes excursions to the Highlands, to the Border Cheviots and Northumberland; rides free and far, on his stout galloway, through bog and brake, over the dim moory Debatable Land,—over Flodden and other fields and places, where, though he yet knew it not, his work lay. No land, however dim and moory, but either has had or will have its poet, and so become not unknown



before him in his researches, seems very doubtful. 'He was *naikin' Libbald* at the time,' said Mr. Shortreed; 'but he didna ken maybe what he was about till years had passed: at first he thought o' little, I daresay, but the querness and the fun.'

"In those days," says the Memorandum before me, 'advocates were not so plenty—at least about Liddisdale'; and the worthy Sheriff-substitute goes on to describe the sort of bustle, not unmingled with alarm, produced at the first farm-house they visited (Willie Elliot's at Millburnholm), when the honest man was informed of the quality of one of his guests. When they dismounted, accordingly, he received Mr. Scott with great ceremony, and insisted upon himself leading his horse to the stable. Shortreed accompanied Willie, however; and the latter, after taking a deliberate peep at Scott, 'out-by the edge of the door-cheek', whispered, 'Weel, Robin, I say, de'il hae me if I's be a bit scared for him now; he's just a chield like ourselves, I think'. Half-a-dozen dogs of all degrees had already gathered round 'the advocate', and his way of returning their compliments had set Willie Elliot at once at his ease.

"According to Mr. Shortreed, this good man of Millburnholm was the great original of Dandie Dinmont." \* \* \* "They dined at Millburnholm; and, after having lingered over Willie Elliot's punch-bowl, until, in Mr. Shortreed's phrase, they were 'half-glowrin', mounted their steeds again, and proceeded to Dr. Elliot's at Cleughhead, where ('for', says my Memorandum, 'folk werena very nice in those days') the two travellers slept in one and the same bed,—as, indeed, seems to have been the case with them throughout most of their excursions in this primitive district. Dr. Elliot (a clergyman) had already a large MS. collection of the ballads Scott was in quest of." \* \* \* "Next morning they seem to have ridden a long way for the express

purpose of visiting one 'auld Thomas o' Tuzzie-hop', another Elliot, I suppose, who was celebrated for his skill on the Border pipe, and in particular for being in possession of the real *bill* of *Dick o' the Cow*. Before starting, that is, at six o'clock, the ballad-hunters had, 'just to lay the stomach, a devilled duck or twae, and some *London* porter'. Auld Thomas found them, nevertheless, well disposed for 'breakfast' on their arrival at Tuzziehop; and this being over, he delighted them with one of the most hideous and unearthly of all specimens of 'riding music', and, moreover, with considerable libations of whisky-punch, manufactured in a certain wooden vessel, resembling a very small milkpail, which he called 'Wisdom', because it 'made' only a few spoonful of spirits, though he had the art of replenishing it so adroitly, that it had been celebrated for fifty years as more fatal to sobriety than any bowl in the parish. Having done due honour to 'Wisdom', they again mounted, and proceeded over moss and moor to some other equally hospitable master of the pipe. 'Ah me,' says Shortreed, 'sic an end-less fund o' humour and drollery as he then had wi' him! Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped, how bravie he suited himself to everybody! He aye did as the lave did; never made himself the great man, or took ony airs in the company. I've seen him in a' moods in these jaunts, grave and gay, daff and serious, sober and drunk—(this, however, even in our wildest rambles, was rare)—but, drunk or sober, he was aye the gentleman. He lookit excessively heavy and stupid when he was *foi*, but he was never out o' gude-humour."

These are questionable doings, questionably narrated; but what shall we say of the follow-

ing, wherein the element of whisky plays an extremely prominent part? We will say that it *is* questionable, and not exemplary, whisky mounting clearly beyond its level; that indeed charity hopes and conjectures, here may be some aggravating of features for effect's sake!

"On reaching, one evening, some *Charlieshope* or other (I forget the name) among those wildernesses, they found a kindly reception, as usual; but, to their agreeable surprise after some days of hard living, a measured and orderly hospitality as respected liquor. Soon after supper, at which a bottle of elderberry wine alone had been produced, a young student of divinity, who happened to be in the house, was called upon to take the 'big ha' Bible', in the good old fashion of 'Burns's Saturday Night'; and some progress had been already made in the service, when the good-man of the farm, whose 'tendency', as Mr. Mitchell says, 'was soporific', scandalised his wife and the dominie by starting suddenly from his knees, and, rubbing his eyes, with a stentorian exclamation of 'By ———, here's the keg at last!' and in tumbled, as he spoke the word, a couple of sturdy herdsman, whom, on hearing a day before of the advocate's approaching visit, he had despatched to a certain smuggler's haunt, at some considerable distance, in quest of a supply of *run* brandy from the Solway Frith. The pious 'exercise' of the household was hopelessly interrupted. With a thousand apologies for his hitherto shabby entertainment, this jolly Elliot, or Armstrong, had the welcome *keg* mounted on the table without a moment's delay, and gentle and simple, not forgetting the dominie, continued carousing about it until daylight streamed-in upon the party. Sir Walter Scott seldom failed, when I saw him in company with his Liddesdale



companion, to mimic with infinite humour the sudden outburst of his old host on hearing the clatter of horses' feet, which he knew to indicate the arrival of the keg—the consternation of the dame—and the rueful despair with which the young clergyman closed the book."

From which *Liddesdale raids*, which we here, like the young clergyman, close not without a certain rueful despair, let the reader draw what nourishment he can. They evince satisfactorily, though in a rude manner, that in those days young advocates, and Scott like the rest of them, were *alive* and alert,—whisky sometimes preponderating. But let us now fancy that the jovial young Advocate has pleaded his first cause; has served in yeomanry drills; been wedded, been promoted Sheriff, without romance in either case; dabbling a little the while, under guidance of Monk Lewis, in translations from the German, in translation of Goethe's *Götz with the Iron Hand*;—and we have arrived at the threshold of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and the opening of a new century.

Hitherto, therefore, there has been made out, by Nature and Circumstance working together, nothing unusually remarkable, yet still something very valuable; a stout effectual man of thirty, full of broad sagacity and good humour, with faculties in him fit for any burden of business, hospitality and duty, legal or civic:—with what other faculties in him no one could yet say. As indeed, who, after lifelong inspection, can say what is in any

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man? The uttered part of a man's life, let us always repeat, bears to the unuttered, unconscious part a small unknown proportion; he himself never knows it, much less do others. Give him room, give him *impulse*; he reaches down to the Infinite with that so straitly-imprisoned soul of his; and *can* do miracles if need be! It is one of the comfortablest truths that great men abound, though in the unknown state. Nay, as above hinted, our greatest, being also by nature our *quietest*, are perhaps those that remain unknown! Philosopher Fichte took comfort in this belief, when from all pulpits and editorial desks, and publications periodical and stationary, he could hear nothing but the infinite chattering and twittering of commonplace become ambitious; and in the infinite stir of motion no-whither, and of din which should have been silence, all seemed churned into one tempestuous yesty froth, and the stern Fichte almost desired "taxes on knowledge" to allay it little;—he comforted himself, we say, by the unshaken belief that Thought did still exist in Germany; that thinking men, each in his own corner, were verily doing their work, though in a silent latent manner. Walter Scott, as a latent Walter, had never amused all men for a score of years in the course of centuries and eternities, or gained and lost several hundred thousand pounds sterling by Literature; but he might have been a happy and by no means a useless,—nay, who knows at bottom whether not a still usefuller Walter! However, that

was not his fortune. The Genius of rather a singular age, — an age at once destitute of faith and terrified at scepticism, with little knowledge of its whereabouts, with many sorrows to bear or front, and on the whole with a life to lead in these new circumstances, — had said to himself: What man shall be the temporary comforter, or were it but the spiritual comfort-maker, of this my poor singular age, to solace its dead tedium and manifold sorrows a little? So had the Genius said, looking over all the world, What man? and found him walking the dusty Outer Parliament-house of Edinburgh, with his advocate-gown on his back; and exclaimed, That is he!

The *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* proved to be a well, from which flowed one of the broadest rivers. Metrical Romances (which in due time pass into Prose Romances); the old life of men resuscitated for us: it is a mighty word! Not as dead tradition, but as a palpable presence, the past stood before us. There they were, the rugged old fighting men; in their doughty simplicity and strength, with their heartiness, their healthiness, their stout self-help, in their iron basnets, leather jerkins, jack-boots, in their quaintness of manner and costume; there as they looked and lived: it was like a new discovered continent in Literature; for the new century, a bright El Dorado, — or else some fat beatific land of Cockaigne, and Paradise of Donothings. To the opening nineteenth century, in its languor and paralysis, nothing could have been wel-

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corner. Most unexpected, most refreshing and exhilarating: behold our new El Dorado; our fat beatific Lobberland, where one can enjoy and do nothing! It was the time for such a new Literature: and this Walter Scott was the man for it. The *Lays*, the *Marmion*, the *Lays* and *Lords* of Lake and Isles, followed in quick succession, with ever-widening profit and praise. How many thousands of guineas were paid-down for each new Lay; how many thousands of copies (fifty and more sometimes) were printed off, then and subsequently; what complimenting, reviewing, renown and apotheosis there was: all is recorded in these Seven Volumes, which will be valuable in literary statistics. It is a history, brilliant, remarkable; the outlines of which are known to all. The reader shall recall it, or conceive it. No blaze in his fancy is likely to mount higher than the reality did.

At this middle period of his life, therefore, Scott, enriched with copyrights, with new official incomes and promotions, rich in money, rich in repute, presents himself as a man in the full career of success. "Health, wealth, and wit to guide them" (as his vernacular Proverb says), all these three are his. The field is open for him, and victory there; his own faculty, his own self, unshackled, victoriously unfolds itself,—the highest blessedness that can befall a man. Wide circle of friends, personal loving admirers; warmth of domestic joys, vouchsafed to all that can true-heartedly nestle down among them; light of radiance

and renown given only to a few: who would not call Scott happy? But the happiest circumstance of all is, as we said above, that Scott had in himself a right healthy soul, rendering him little dependent on outward circumstances. Things showed themselves to him not in distortion or borrowed light or bloom, but as they were. Endeavour lay in him and endurance, in due measure; and clear vision of what was to be endeavoured after. Were one to preach a Sermon on Health, as really were worth doing, Scott ought to be the text. Theories are demonstrably true in the way of logic; and then in the way of practice they prove true or else not true: but here is the grand experiment, Do they turn-out well? What boots it that a man's creed is the wisest, that his system of principles is the superfinest, if, when set to work, the life of him does nothing but jar, and fret itself into *holes*? They are untrue in that, were it in nothing else, these principles of his; openly convicted of untruth;—fit only, shall we say, to be rejected as counterfeits, and hung to the dogs? We say not that; but we do say, that ill-health, of body or of mind, is *defeat*, is battle (in a good or in a bad cause) with bad success; that health alone is victory. Let all men, if they can manage it, contrive to be healthy! He who in what cause soever sinks into pain and disease, let him take thought of it; let him know well that it is not good *he* has arrived at yet, but surely evil,—may, or may not be, on the way towards good.

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Scott's healthiness showed itself decisively in all things, and nowhere more decisively than in this: the way in which he took his fame; the estimate he from the first formed of fame. Money will buy money's worth; but the thing men call fame, what is it? A gaudy emblazonry, not good for much,—except, indeed, as it too may turn to money. To Scott it was a profitable pleasing superfluity, no necessary of life. Not necessary, now or ever! Seemingly without much effort, but taught by Nature, and the instinct which instructs the sound heart what is good for it and what is not, he felt that he could always do without this same emblazonry of reputation; that he ought to put no trust in it; but be ready at any time to see it pass away from him, and to hold on his way as before. It is incalculable, as we conjecture, what evil he escaped in this manner; what perversions, irritations, mean agonies without a name, he lived wholly apart from, knew nothing of. Happily before fame arrived, he had reached the mature age at which all this was easier to him. What a strange Nemesis lurks in the felicities of men! In thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey, in thy belly it shall be bitter as gall! Some weakly-organised individual, we will say at the age of five-and-twenty, whose main or whole talent rests on some prurient susceptibility, and nothing under it but shallowness and vacuum, is clutched hold of by the general imagination, is whirled aloft to the giddy height; and taught to believe the divine-seeming message that he

is a great man: such individual seems the luckiest of men: and, alas, is he not the unluckiest? Swallow not the Circe-draught, O weakly-organised individual; it is fell poison; it will dry-up the fountains of thy whole existence, and all will grow withered and parched; thou shalt be wretched under the sun! Is there, for example, a sadder book than that *Life of Byron*, by Moore? To omit mere prurient susceptivities that rest on vacuum, look at poor Byron, who really had much sub-stance in him. Sitting there in his self-exile, with a proud heart striving to persuade itself that it despises the entire created Universe; and far off, in foggy Babylon, let any pitifullest whipster draw pen on him, your proud Byron writhes in torture,—as if the pitiful whipster were a magician, or his pen a galvanic wire struck into the Byron's spinal marrow! Lamentable, despicable,—one had rather be a kitten and cry mew! O son of Adam, great or little, according as thou art lovable, those thou livest with will love thee. Those thou livest *not* with, is it of moment that they have the alphabetic letters of thy name engraved on their memory, with some signpost likeness of thee (as like as I to Hercules) appended to them? It is not of moment; in sober truth, not of any moment at all! And yet, behold, there is no soul now whom thou canst love freely,—from *one* soul only art thou always sure of reverence enough; in presence of no soul is it rightly well with thee! How is thy world become desert; and thou, for the sake

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of a little babblement of tongues, art poor, bankrupt, insolvent not in purse, but in heart and mind. "The Golden Calf of self-love", says Jean Paul, "has grown into a burning Phalaris' Bull, to consume its owner and worshipper." Ambition, the desire of shining and outshining, was the beginning of Sin in this world. The man of letters who founds upon his fame, does he not thereby alone declare himself a follower of Lucifer (named *Satan*, the Enemy), and member of the Satanic school?—

It was in this poetic period that Scott formed his connexion with the Ballantynes; and embarked, though under cover, largely in trade. To those who regard him in the heroic light, and will have *Vates* to signify Prophet as well as Poet, this portion of his biography seems somewhat incongruous. Viewed as it stood in the reality, as he was and as it was, the enterprise, since it proved so unfortunate, may be called lamentable, but cannot be called unnatural. The practical Scott, looking towards practical issues in all things, could not but find hard cash one of the most practical. If by any means cash could be honestly produced, were it by writing poems, were it by printing them, why not? Great things might be done ultimately; great difficulties were at once got rid of,—manifold higgings of booksellers, and contradictions of sinners hereby fell away. A printing and bookselling speculation was not so alien for a maker of books. Voltaire, who indeed got no copyrights, made much money





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motion? Be this as it may, surely since Shakspeare's time there has been no great speaker so unconscious of an aim in speaking as Walter Scott. Equally unconscious these two utterances; equally the sincere complete products of the minds they came from: and now if they were equally *deep*? Or, if the one was living fire, and the other was futile phosphorescence and mere resinous firework? It will depend on the relative worth of the minds; for both were equally spontaneous, both equally expressed themselves unencumbered by an ulterior aim. Beyond drawing audiences to the Globe Theatre, Shakspeare contemplated no result in those plays of his. Yet they have had results! Utter with free heart what thy own *dæmon* gives thee: if fire from heaven, it shall be well; if resinous firework, it shall be—as well as it could be, or better than otherwise! The candid judge will, in general, require that a speaker, in so extremely serious a Universe as this of ours, have something to speak about. In the heart of the speaker there ought to be some kind of gospel-tidings, burning till it be uttered; otherwise it were better for him that he altogether held his peace. A gospel somewhat more decisive than this of Scott's,—except to an age altogether languid, without either scepticism or faith! These things the candid judge will demand of literary men; yet withal will recognise the great worth there is in Scott's honesty if in nothing more, in his being the thing he was with such entire good faith. Here is a something, not a no-

thing. If no skyborn messenger, heaven looking through his eyes; then neither is it a chimaera with his systems, crotchets, cant, fanaticisms, and "last infirmity of noble minds",—full of misery, unrest and ill-will; but a substantial, peaceable, terrestrial man. Far as the Earth is under the Heaven does Scott stand below the former sort of character; but high as the cheerful flowery Earth is above waste Tartarus does he stand above the latter. Let him live in his own fashion, and do honour to him in that.

It were late in the day to write criticisms on those Metrical Romances: at the same time, we may remark, the great popularity they had seems natural enough. In the first place, there was the indisputable impress of worth, of genuine human force, in them. This, which lies in some degree, or is thought to lie, at the bottom of all popularity, did to an unusual degree disclose itself in these rhymed romances of Scott's. Pictures were actually painted and presented; human emotions conceived and sympathised with. Considering what wretched Della-Cruscan and other ramping-up of old worn-out tatters was the staple article then, it may be granted that Scott's excellence was superior and supreme. When a Hayley was the main singer, a Scott might well be hailed with warm welcome. Consider whether the *Lovers of the Plants*, and even the *Lovers of the Triangles*, could be worth the loves and hates of men and women! Scott was as preferable to what he displaced, as the sub-

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stance is to wearisomely repeated shadow of a substance. But, in the second place, we may say that the *kind* of worth which Scott manifested was fitted especially for the then temper of men. We have called it an age fallen into spiritual languor, destitute of belief, yet terrified at scepticism; reduced to live a stunted half-life, under strange new circumstances. Now vigorous whole-life, this was what of all things these delineations offered. The reader was carried back to rough strong times, wherein those maladies of ours had not yet arisen. Brawny fighters, all cased in buff and iron, their hearts too sheathed in oak and triple brass, caprioled their huge war-horses, shook their death-doing spears; and went forth in the most determined manner, nothing doubting. The reader sighed, yet not without a reflex solacement: "Oh, that I too had lived in those times, had never known these logic-cobwebs, this doubt, this sickliness; and been and felt myself alive among men alive!" Add lastly, that in this new-found poetic world there was no call for effort on the reader's part; what excellence they had, exhibited itself at a glance. It was for the reader, not the El Dorado only, but a beatific land of Cockaigne and Paradise of Donothings! The reader, what the vast majority of readers so long to do, was allowed to lie down at his ease, and be ministered to. What the Turkish bathkeeper is said to aim at with his frictions, and shampooings, and fomentings, more or less effectually, that the patient in total idle-

ness may have the delights of activity,—was here to a considerable extent realised. The languid imagination fell back into its rest; an artist was there who could supply it with high-painted scenes, with sequences of stirring action, and whisper to it, Be at ease, and let thy tepid element be comfortable to thee. “The rude man”, says a critic, “requires only to see something going on. The man of more refinement must be made to feel. The man of complete refinement must be made to reflect.”

We named the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* the fountain from which flowed this great river of Metrical Romances; but according to some they can be traced to a still higher, obscurer spring; to Goethe's *Gotz von Berlichingen with the Iron Hand*; of which, as we have seen, Scott in his earlier days executed a translation. Dated a good many years ago, the following words in a criticism on Goethe are found written; which probably are still new to most readers of this Review:

“The works just mentioned, *Gotz* and *Werter*, though noble specimens of youthful talent, are still not so much distinguished by their intrinsic merits as by their splendid fortune. It would be difficult to name two books which have exercised a deeper influence on the subsequent literature of Europe than these two performances of a young author; his first-fruits, the produce of his twenty-fourth year. *Werter* appeared to seize the hearts of men in all quarters of the world, and to utter for them the word which they had long been waiting to hear. As usually happens too, this same word, once

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uttered, was soon abundantly repeated; spoken in all dialects, and chanted through all notes of the gamut, till the sound of it had grown a weariness rather than a pleasure. Sceptical sentimentality, view-hunting, love, friendship, suicide and desperation, became the staple of literary ware; and though the epidemic, after a long course of years, subsided in Germany, it reappeared with various modifications in other countries, and everywhere abundant traces of its good and bad effects are still to be discerned. The fortune of *Berlichingen with the Iron Hand*, though less sudden, was by no means less exalted. In his own country, Götz, though he now stands solitary and childless, became the parent of an innumerable progeny of chivalry plays, feudal delineations, and poetico-antiquarian performances; which, though long ago deceased, made noise enough in their day and generation: and with ourselves his influence has been perhaps still more remarkable. Sir Walter Scott's first literary enterprise was a translation of *Götz von Berlichingen*: and, if genius could be communicated like instruction, we might call this work of Goethe's the prime cause of *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*, with all that has followed from the same creative hand. Truly, a grain of seed that has lighted in the right soil! For if not firmer and fairer, it has grown to be taller and broader than any other tree; and all the nations of the earth are still yearly gathering of its fruit."

How far *Götz von Berlichingen* actually affected Scott's literary destination, and whether without it the rhymed romances, and then the prose romances of the Author of *Waverley*, would not have followed as they did, must remain a very obscure question; obscure, and not important. Of the fact, however, there is

no doubt, that these two tendencies, which may be named *Götzism* and *Werterism*, of the former of which Scott was representative with us, have made, and are still in some quarters making the tour of all Europe. In Germany too there was this affectionate half-regretful looking-back into the Past; Germany had its buff-belted watch-tower period in literature, and had even got done with it, before Scott began. Then as to *Werterism*, had not we English our Byron and his genus? No form of *Werterism* in any other country had half the potency; as our Scott carried Chivalry Literature to the ends of the world, so did our Byron *Werterism*. France, busy with its Revolution and Napoleon, had little leisure at the moment for *Götzism* or *Werterism*; but it has had them both since, in a shape of its own: witness the whole "Literature of Desperation" in our own days; the beggarliest form of *Werterism* yet seen, probably its expiring final form: witness also, at the other extremity of the scale, a noble-gifted Chateaubriand, Götz and Werter both in one.—Curious: how all Europe is but like a set of parishes of the same county; participant of the self-same influences, ever since the Crusades, and earlier;—and these glorious wars of ours are but like parish-brawls, which begin in mutual ignorance, in intoxication and boastful speech; which end in broken windows, damage, waste and bloody noses; and which one hopes the general good sense is now in the way towards putting down, in some measure!

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But leaving this to be as it can, what it concerned us here to remark, was that British Werterism, in the shape of those Byron Poems, so potent and poignant, produced on the languid appetite of men a mighty effect. This too was a "class of feelings deeply important to modern minds; feelings which arise from *passion incapable of being converted into action*, which belong to an age as indolent, cultivated and unbelieving as our own!" The "languid age without either faith or scepticism" turned towards Byronism with an interest altogether peculiar: here, if no cure for its miserable paralysis and languor, was at least an indignant statement of the misery; an indignant Ernulphus' curse read over it,—which all men felt to be something. Half-regretful lookings into the Past gave place, in many quarters, to Ernulphus' cursings of the Present. Scott was among the first to perceive that the day of Metrical Chivalry Romances was declining. He had held the sovereignty for some half-score of years, a comparatively long lease of it; and now the time seemed come for dethronement, for abdication: an unpleasant business; which however he held himself ready, as a brave man will, to transact with composure and in silence. After all, Poetry was not his staff of life; Poetry had already yielded him much money; *this* at least it would not take back from him. Busy always with editing, with compiling, with multiplex official commercial business, and solid interests, he beheld the coming change with unmoved eye.



Resignation he was prepared to exhibit in this matter;—and now behold there proved to be no need of resignation. Let the Metrical Romance become a Prose one; shake off its rhyme-letters, and try a wider sweep! In the spring of 1814 appeared *Waverley*; an event memorable in the annals of British Literature; in the annals of British Bookselling thrice and four times memorable. Byron sang, but Scott narrated; and when the song had sung itself out through all variations onwards to the *Don Juan* one, Scott was still found narrating, and carrying the whole world along with him. All bygone popularity of chivalry-days was swallowed up in a far greater. What “series” followed out of *Waverley*, and how and with what result, is known to all men; was witnessed and watched with a kind of rapt astonishment by all. Hardly any literary reputation ever rose so high in our Island; no reputation at all ever spread so wide. Walter Scott became Sir Walter Scott, Baronet, of Abbotsford; on whom Fortune seemed to pour her whole cornucopia of wealth, honour and worldly good; the favourite of Princes and of Peasants, and all intermediate men. His “*Waverley series*,” swift-following one on the other apparently without end, was the universal reading; looked for like an annual harvest, by all ranks, in all European countries. A curious circumstance superadded itself, that the author though known was unknown. From the first, most people suspected, and soon after the first, few intelligent persons much doubted, that the

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Author of *Waverley* was Walter Scott. Yet a certain mystery was still kept up; rather piquant to the public; doubtless very pleasant to the author, who saw it all; who probably had not to listen, as other hapless individuals often had; to this or the other long-drawn "clear proof at last", that the author was not Walter Scott, but a certain astonishing Mr. So-and-so;—one of the standing miseries of human life in that time. But for the privileged Author, it was like a king travelling incognito. All men know that he is a high king, chivalrous Gustaf or Kaiser Joseph; but he mingles in their meetings without cumber of etiquette or lonesome ceremony, as Chevalier du Nord, or Count of Lorraine: he has none of the weariness of royalty, and yet all the praise, and the satisfaction of hearing it with his own ears. In a word, the *Waverley* Novels circulated and reigned triumphant; to the general imagination the "Author of *Waverley*" was like some living mythological personage, and ranked among the chief wonders of the world.

How a man lived and demeaned himself in such unwonted circumstances, is worth seeing. We would gladly quote from Scott's correspondence of this period; but that does not much illustrate the matter. His letters, as above stated, are never without interest, yet also seldom or never very interesting. They are full of cheerfulness, of wit and ingenuity; but they do not treat of aught intimate; without impeaching their sincerity, what is called sincerity, one may say they do not, in any case

whatever, proceed from the innermost parts of the mind. Conventional forms, due consideration of your own and your correspondent's pretensions and vanities, are at no moment left out of view. The epistolary stream runs on, lucid, free, glad-flowing; but always, as it were, *parallel* to the real substance of the matter, never coincident with it. One feels it hollowish under foot: Letters they are of a most humane man of the world, even exemplary in that kind; but with the man of the world always visible in them;—as indeed it was little in Scott's way to speak, perhaps even with himself, in any other fashion. We select rather some glimpses of him from Mr. Lockhart's record. The first is of dining with Royalty or Prince-Regentship itself; an almost official matter:

"On hearing from Mr. Croker (then Secretary to the Admiralty) that Scott was to be in town by the middle of March (1815), the Prince said, 'Let me know when he comes, and I'll get-up a snug little dinner that will suit him'; and, after he had been presented and graciously received at the *levee*, he was invited to dinner accordingly, through his excellent friend Mr. Adam (now Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court in Scotland), who at that time held a confidential office in the royal household. The Regent had consulted with Mr. Adam, also, as to the composition of the party. 'Let us have,' said he, 'just a few friends of his own, and the more Scotch the better; and both the Commissioner and Mr. Croker assure me that the party was the most interesting and agreeable one in their recollection. It comprised, I believe, the Duke of York

—the Duke of Gordon (then Marquess of Huntly)  
 —the Marquess of Hertford (then Lord Yarmouth)  
 —the Earl of Fife—and Scott's early friend, Lord Melville. 'The Prince and Scott,' says Mr. Croker, 'were the two most brilliant story-tellers, in their several ways, that I have ever happened to meet; they were both aware of their *forte*, and both exerted themselves that evening with delightful effect. On going home, I really could not decide which of them had shone the most. The Regent was enchanted with Scott, as Scott with him; and on all his subsequent visits to London, he was a frequent guest at the royal table.' The Lord Chief Commissioner remembers that the Prince was particularly delighted with the poet's anecdotes of the old Scotch judges and lawyers, which his Royal Highness sometimes *capped* by ludicrous traits of certain ermined sages of his own acquaintance. Scott told, among others, a story, which he was fond of telling, of his old friend the Lord Justice-Clerk Braxfield; and the commentary of his Royal Highness on hearing it amused Scott, who often mentioned it afterwards. The anecdote is this: Braxfield, whenever he went on a particular circuit, was in the habit of visiting a gentleman of good fortune in the neighbourhood of one of the assize towns, and staying at least one night, which, being both of them ardent chess-players, they usually concluded with their favourite game. One Spring circuit the battle was not decided at daybreak; so the Justice-Clerk said, 'Weel, Donald, I must e'en come back this gate, and let the game lie ower for the present:' and back he came in October, but not to his old friend's hospitable house; for that gentleman had in the interim been apprehended on a capital charge (of forgery), and his name stood on the *Porteous Roll*, or list of those who were about to be tried under his former guest's auspices. The laird was indicted and tried accordingly, and the

jury returned a verdict of *guilty*. Braxfield forthwith put on his cocked hat (which answers to the black cap in England), and pronounced the sentence of the law in the usual terms—'To be hanged by the neck until you be dead; and may the Lord have mercy upon your unhappy soul!' Having concluded this awful formula in his most sonorous cadence, Braxfield, dismounting his formidable beaver, gave a familiar nod to his unfortunate acquaintance, and said to him in a sort of chuckling whisper—'And now, Donald, my man, I think I've checkmated you for ance.' The Regent laughed heartily at this specimen of Macqueen's brutal humour; and 'Faith, Walter,' said he, 'this old big-wig seems to have taken things as coolly as my tyrannical self. Don't you remember Tom Moore's description of me at breakfast—

'The table spread with tea and toast,  
Death-warrants and the *Morning Post*?'

"Towards midnight, the Prince called for a bumper, with all the honours, to the Author of 'Waverley'; and looked significantly, as he was charging his own glass, to Scott. Scott seemed somewhat puzzled for a moment, but instantly recovering himself, and filling his glass to the brim, said, 'Your Royal Highness looks as if you thought I had some claim to the honours of this toast. I have no such pretensions; but shall take good care that the real Simon Pure hears of the high compliment that has now been paid him.' He then drank off his claret; and joined with a stentorian voice in the cheering, which the Prince himself timed. But before the company could resume their seats, his Royal Highness, 'Another of the same, if you please, to the Author of *Marmion*,—and now, Walter, my man, I have checkmated you for *ance*.' The second bumper was followed by cheers still

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more prolonged: and Scott then rose, and returned thanks in a short address, which struck the Lord Chief Commissioner as 'alike grave and graceful'. This story has been circulated in a very perverted shape." \* \* \* "Before he left town he again dined at Carlton House, when the party was a still smaller one than before, and the merriment if possible still more free. That nothing might be wanting, the Prince sang several capital songs."

Or take, at a very great interval in many senses, this glimpse of another dinner, altogether *unofficially* and much better described. It is James Ballantyne the printer and publisher's dinner, in Saint John Street, Canon-gate, Edinburgh, on the birth eve of a Waverley Novel:

"The feast was, to use one of James's own favourite epithets, *gorgeous*; an aldermanic display of turtle and venison, with the suitable accompaniments of iced punch, potent ale, and generous Madeira. When the cloth was drawn, the burly præses arose, with all he could muster of the port of John Kemble, and spouted with a sonorous voice the formula of Macbeth,

'Fill full!

I drink to the general joy of the whole table!'

This was followed by 'the King, God bless him!' and second came—'Gentlemen, there is another toast which never has been nor shall be omitted in this house of mine: I give you the health of Mr. Walter Scott, with three times three!' All honour having been done to this health, and Scott having briefly thanked the company, with some expressions of warm affection to their host, Mrs. Ballantyne

retired;—the bottles passed round twice or thrice in the usual way; and then James rose once more, every vein on his brow distended; his eyes solemnly fixed on vacancy, to propose, not as before in his stentorian key, but with ‘‘bated breath,’’ in the sort of whisper by which a stage-conspirator thrills the gallery,—‘Gentlemen, a bumper to the immortal *Author of Waverley!*’—The uproar of chattering, in which Scott made a fashion of joining, was succeeded by deep silence; and then Ballantyne proceeded—

‘In his Lord-Burleigh look, serene and serious, A something of imposing and mysterious’—

to lament the obscurity, in which his illustrious but too modest correspondent still chose to conceal himself from the plaudits of the world; to thank the company for the manner in which the *nomini umbra* had been received; and to assure them that the Author of Waverley would, when informed of the circumstance, feel highly delighted—‘the proudest hour of his life,’ &c. &c. The cool, demure fun of Scott’s features during all this mun-mery was perfect; and Erskine’s attempt at a gay *nonchalance* was still more ludicrously meritorious. Aldiboron’s phosphorio, however, bursting as he was, knew too well to allow the new Novel to be made the subject of discussion. Its name was announced, and success to it crowned another cup; but after that, no more of Jederali. To cut the thread, he rolled out unbidden some one of his many theatrical songs, in a style that would have done no dishonour to almost any orchestra—*The Maid of Lodi*, or perhaps *The Bay of Biscay*, O!—or *The sweet little cherub that sits up aloft*. Other toasts followed, interspersed with ditties from other performers; old George Thomson, the friend of Burns, was ready, for one, with *The Moorland Wedding*, or *Willie brew’d a peck o’ maut*;—and so it

went on, until Scott and Erskine, with any clerical or very staid personage that had chanced to be admitted, saw fit to withdraw. Then the scene was changed. The claret and olives made way for broiled bones and a mighty bowl of punch; and when a few glasses of the hot beverage had restored his powers, James opened *ex retinenda* on the merits of the forthcoming Romance. "One chapter—one chapter only!" was the cry. After 'Nay, by'r Lady, nay!' and a few more coy shifts, the proof-sheets were at length produced, and James, with many a prefatory hem, read aloud what he considered as the most striking dialogue they contained.

"The first I heard so read was the interview between Jeanie Deans, the Duke of Argyll and Queen Caroline, in Richmond Park; and, notwithstanding some spice of the pompous tricks to which he was addicted, I must say he did the inimitable scene great justice. At all events, the effect it produced was deep and memorable; and no wonder that the exulting typographer's *one bumper more to Jedediah Cleishbotham* preceded his parting-stave, which was uniformly *The Last Words of Marmion*, executed certainly with no contemptible rivalry of Braham."

Over at Abbotsford things wear a still more prosperous aspect. Scott is building there, by the pleasant banks of the Tweed; he has bought and is buying land there; fast as the new gold comes in for a new Waverley Novel, or even faster, it changes itself into moory acres, into stone, and hewn or planted wood:

"About the middle of February" (1820), says Mr. Lockhart, "it having been ere that time arranged that I should marry his eldest daughter in the course of the spring,—I accompanied him and



part of his family on one of those flying visits to Abbotstord, with which he often indulged himself on a Saturday during term. Upon such occasions, Scott appeared at the usual hour in court, but wearing, instead of the official suit of black, his country morning-dress, green jacket and so forth, under the clerk's gown."—"At noon, when the Court broke up, Peter Mathieson was sure to be in attendance in the Parliament Close; and, five minutes after, the gown had been tossed off; and Scott, rubbing his hands for glee, was under weigh for Tweedside. As we proceeded," &c.

"Next morning there appeared at breakfast John Ballantyne, who had at this time a shooting or hunting-box a few miles off, in the vale of the Leader, and with him Mr. Constable, his guest; and it being a fine clear day, as soon as Scott had read the church-service and one of Jeremy Taylor's sermons, we all sallied out before noon on a perambulation of his upland territories; Maida (the hound) and the rest of the favourites accompanying our march. At starting we were joined by the constant henchman, Tom Purdie,—and I may save myself the trouble of any attempt to describe his appearance, for his master has given us an inimitably true one in introducing a certain personage of his *Redgauntlet*:—"He was, perhaps, sixty years old; yet his brow was not much furrowed, and his jet-black hair was only grizzled, not whitened, by the advance of age. All his motions spoke strength unabated; and, though rather undersized, he had very broad shoulders, was square-made, thin-flanked, and apparently combined in his frame, muscular strength and activity; the last somewhat impaired, perhaps, by years, but the first remaining in full vigour. A hard and harsh countenance; eyes far sunk under projecting eyebrows, which were grizzled like his hair; a wide mouth, furnished from ear to ear with a range of unimpaired teeth of uncommon white-

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ness, and a size and breadth which might have become the jaws of an ogre, completed this delightful portrait.' Equip this figure in Scott's cast-off green jacket, white hat and drab trousers; and imagine that years of kind treatment, comfort and the honest consequence of a confidential *grieze* had softened away much of the hardness and harshness originally impressed on the visage by anxious penury, and the sinister habits of a *black-fisher*;—and the Tom Purdie of 1820 stands before us.

"We were all delighted to see how completely Scott had recovered his bodily vigour, and none more so than Constable, who, as he puffed and panted after him, up one ravine and down another, often stopped to wipe his forehead, and remarked, that 'it was not every author who should lead him such a dance'. But Purdie's face shone with rapture as he observed how severely the swag-bellied bookseller's activity was tasked. Scott exclaimed exultingly, though, perhaps, for the tenth time, 'This will be a glorious spring for our trees, Tom!'—'You may say that, Sheriff,' quoth Tom,—and then lingering a moment for Constable—'My certy,' he added, scratching his head, 'and I think it will be a grand season for *our buiks* too.' But indeed Tom always talked of *our buiks*, as if they had been as regular products of the soil as *our aits* and *our birks*. Having threaded first the Hexileugh and then the Rhymer's Glen, we arrived at Huntly Burn, where the hospitality of the kind *Weird Sisters*, as Scott called the Miss Fergusons, reanimated our exhausted bibliopoles, and gave them courage to extend their walk a little farther down the same famous brook. Here there was a small cottage in a very sequestered situation" (named Chiefswood), "by making some little additions to which Scott thought it might be converted into a suitable summer residence for his daughter and future son-in-law." \* \* \* "As we walked homeward, Scott being a little fatigued, laid

The good Sir Walter, like a quiet brave man, did neither. He let the matter take its course; enjoyed what was enjoyable in it; endured what could not well be helped; persisted meanwhile in writing his daily portion of romance; *scylla*, in preserving his composure of heart;—in a word, accommodated himself to this loud-buzzing environment, and made it serve him, as he would have done (perhaps with more case) to a silent, poor and solitary one. No doubt it affected him too, and in the lamentablest way fevered his internal life, though he kept it well down; but it affected him *less* than it would have done almost any other man. For his guests were not all of the bluebottle sort; far from that, Mr. Lockhart shall furnish us with the brightest aspect a British Ferny ever yielded, or is like to yield: and therewith we will quit Abbotsford and the dominant and culminating period of Scott's life:

"It was a clear, bright September morning, with a sharpness in the air that doubled the animating influence of the sunshining, and all was in readiness for a grand coursing-match on Newark Hill. The only guest who had chalked-out other sport for himself was the staunchest of anglers, Mr. Rose; but he too was there on his *stilly*, armed with his salmon-rod and landing-net, and attended by his Hives, and Charlie Purdie, a brother of Tom, in those days the most celebrated fisherman of the district. This little group of Walsingtonians, bound for Lord Somerville's preserve, remained lounging about, to witness the start of the main cavalcade. Sir Walter, mounted on Sibyl, was marshalling the order of procession with a huge hunting-whip; and among

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a dozen frolicsome youths and maidens, who seemed disposed to laugh at all discipline, appeared, each on horse-back, each as eager as the youngest sportsman in the troop, Sir Humphry Davy, Dr. Wollaston, and the patriarch of Scottish belles-lettres, Henry Mackenzie. The Man of Feeling, however, was persuaded with some difficulty to resign his steel for the present to his faithful negro follower, and to join Lady Scott in the sociable, until we should reach the ground of our *latter*. Laidlaw, on a strong-tailed wiry Highlander, yeelp *Heddin Grey*, which carried him nimbly and stoutly, although his feet almost touched the ground as he sat, was the adjutant. But the most picturesque figure was the illustrious inventor of the safety-lamp. He had come for his favourite sport of angling, and had been practising it successfully with Rose, his travelling companion, for two or three days preceding this; but he had not prepared for coursing fields, or had left Charlie Purdie's troop for Sir Walter's on a sudden thought, and his fisherman's costume—a brown hat with flexible brim, surrounded with line upon line of catgut, and innumerable fly-hooks—jack-boots worthy of a Dutch smuggler, and a fustian surtout dabbled with the blood of salmon, made a fine contrast with the smart jackets, white-cord breeches, and well-polished jockey-boots of the less distinguished cavaliers about him. Dr. Wollaston was in black; and with his noble serene dignity of countenance might have passed for a sporting archbishop. Mr. Mackenzie, at this time in the 76th year of his age, with a white hat turned up with green, green spectacles, green jacket, and long brown leathern gaiters buttoned upon his nether anatomy, wore a dog-whistle round his neck, and had, all over, the air of as resolute a devotee as the gay captain of Huntly Burn. Tom Purdie and his subalterns had preceded us by a few hours with all the greyhounds that could be collected

at Abbotsford, Darnick, and Melrose; but the giant Maida had remained as his master's orderly, and now gambolled about Sibyl Grey, barking for mere joy like a spaniel puppy.

"The order of march had been all settled, and the sociable was just getting under weigh, when the *Lady Anne* broke from the line, screaming with laughter, and exclaimed, 'Papa, papa, I knew you could never think of going without your pet!' Scott looked round, and I rather think there was a blush as well as a smile upon his face, when he perceived a little black pig frisking about his pony, and evidently a self-elected addition to the party of the day. He tried to look stern, and cracked his whip at the creature, but was in a moment obliged to join in the general cheers. Poor piggy soon found a strap round his neck, and was dragged into the background;—Scott, watching the retreat, reposed with mock pathos the first verse of an old pastoral song—

'What will I do gin my hoggie die?  
 My joy, my pride, my hoggie!  
 My only beast, I had na mair,  
 And woe! but I was vokie!'

—the cheers were redoubled—and the squadron moved on.

"This pig had taken, nobody could tell how, a most sentimental attachment to Scott, and was constantly urging his pretensions to be admitted a regular member of his *tail* along with the greyhounds and terriers; but, indeed, I remember him evincing another surname under the same sort of pertinacity on the part of an affectionate hen. I leave the explanation for philosophers;—but such were the facts. I have too much respect for the vulgarly calumniated dorker, to name him in the same category of pigs with the pig and the hen; but a

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year or two after this time, my wife used to drive a couple of these animals in a little garden-chair, and whenever her father appeared at the door of our cottage, we were sure to see Hannah More and Lady Morgan (as Anne Scott had wickedly christened them) trotting from their pasture, to lay their noses over the paling, and, as Washington Irving says of the old white-haired hedger with the Parisian snuff-box, 'to have a pleasant crack wi' the laird'.

"There" at Chiefswood "my wife and I spent this summer and autumn of 1821;—the first of several seasons which will ever dwell on my memory as the happiest of my life. We were near enough Abbotsford to partake as often as we liked of its brilliant and constantly varying society; yet could do so without being exposed to the worry and exhaustion of spirit which the daily reception of newcomers entailed upon all the family, except Sir Walter himself. But, in truth, even he was not always proof against the annoyances connected with such a style of open housekeeping. Even his temper sank sometimes under the solemn applauses of learned dulness, the vapid raptures of painted and periwigged dowagers, the horse-leech avidity with which underbred foreigners urged their questions, and the pompous simpers of condescending magnates. When sore beset at home in this way, he would every now and then discover that he had some very particular business to attend to on an outlying part of his estate; and, craving the indulgence of his guests overnight, appear at the cabin in the glen before its inhabitants were astir in the morning. The clatter of Sibyl Grey's hoofs, the yelping of Mustard and Spice, and his own joyous shout of *réveillée* under our windows, were the signal that he had burst his toils, and meant for that day to 'take his ease in his inn'. On descending, he was to be found seated with all his dogs and

Surely all this is very beautiful; like a picture of Boccaccio: the ideal of a country life in our time. Why could it not last? Income was not wanting: Scott's official permanent income

ours about him, under a spreading ash that overshadowed half the bank between the cottage and the brook, pointing the edge of his woodman's-axe, and listening to Tom Purdie's lecture touching the plantation that most needed thinning. After breakfast he would take possession of a dressing-room upstairs, and write a chapter of *The Pirate*; and then, having made up and despatched his packet for Mr. Ballantyne, away to join Purdie wherever the foresters were at work—and sometimes to labour among them as strenuously as John Swanson, until it was time either to rejoin his own party at Abbotstford, or the quiet circle of the cottage. When his guests were few and friendly, he often made them come over and meet him at Chiefswood in a body towards evening; and surely he never appeared to more amiable advantage than when helping his young people with their little arrangements upon such occasions. He was ready with all sorts of devices to supply the wants of a narrow establishment; he used to delight particularly in sinking the wine in a well under the *brac* ere he went out, and hauling up the basket just before dinner was announced,—this primitive device being, he said, what he had always practised when a young housekeeper, and in his opinion far superior in its results to any application of ice: and in the same spirit, whenever the weather was sufficiently genial, he voted for dining out of doors altogether, which at once got rid of the inconvenience of very small rooms, and made it natural and easy for the gentlemen to help the ladies, so that the paucity of servants went for nothing.”

was enough to pay for it, to meet the expense of all that was requisite in its way, of all that was not luxurious, sumptuous and despensible. Scott had never known a year without writing books of all kinds. Why should he manufacture and not create, to make more money; and not make one more for a dwelling to himself, till the pile toppled, and crushing, and buried him in its ruins, when he had a safe pleasant dwelling ready of its own accord? Alas, Scott, with all his health, was infected; sick of the feattfullest malady, that of Ambition! To such length had the King's patronage, the world's favour and "silver parties a-day", brought it with him. So the game racket must be kept up, and the ever higher. So masons labour, ditchers dig; and there is endless, altogether deplorable correspondence about marble-slabs for tables, wainscoting of rooms, curtains and the trimmings of curtains, orange-coloured or fawn-coloured: Walter Scott, one of the gifted of the world, whom his admirers call the most gifted, must kill himself that he may be a country gentleman, the founder of a race of Scottish lairds. It is one of the strangest, most tragical histories ever enacted under this sun. So poor a passion can lead so strong a man into such mad extremes. Surely, were not man a fool always, one might say there was something eminently distracted in this, *and* as it would, of a Walter Scott writing daily with the ardour of a steam-engine, that he might make £15,000 a-year, and buy upholstery with it. To cover the walls of a stone house in



Selkirkshire with nicknacks, ancient armour and genealogical shields, what can we name it but a being bit with delirium of a kind? That tract after tract of moorland in the shire of Selkirk should be joined together on parchment and by ring-fence, and named after one's name,—why, it is a shabby small-type edition of your vulgar Napoleons, Alexanders, and conquering heroes, not counted venerable by any teacher of men!—

“The whole world was not half so wide  
To Alexander when he cried  
Because he had but one to subdue,  
As was a narrow paltry tub to  
Diogenes; who ne'er was said,  
For aught that ever I could read,  
To whine, put finger i' the eye and sob,  
Because he had ne'er another tub.”

Not he! And if, “looked at from the Moon,  
which itself is far from Infinitude”, Napoleon's  
dominions were as small as mine, *what*, by any  
chance of possibility, could Abbotstford landed-  
property ever have become? As the Arabs  
say, there is a black speck, were it no bigger  
than a bean's eye, in every soul; which, once  
set it a-working, will overcloud the whole man  
into darkness and quasi-madness, and hurry  
him balefully into Night!

With respect to the literary character of  
these Waverley Novels, so extraordinary in  
their commercial character, there remains, after  
so much reviewing, good and bad, little that  
it were profitable at present to say. The great

fact about them is, that they were faster written and better paid for than any other books in the world. It must be granted, moreover, that they have a worth far surpassing what is usual in such cases; nay, that if Literature had no task but that of harmlessly amusing indolent languid men, here was the very perfection of Literature; that a man, here more emphatically than ever elsewhere, might fling himself back, exclaiming, "Be mine to lie on this sofa, and read everlasting Novels of Walter Scott!" The composition, slight as it often is, usually hangs together in some measure, and *is* a composition. There is a free flow of narrative, of incident and sentiment; an easy master-like coherence throughout, as if it were the free dash of a master's hand, "round as the O of Giotto". It is the perfection of extemporaneous writing. Farthermore, surely he were a blind critic who did not recognise here a certain genial sunshiny freshness and picturesqueness; paintings both of scenery and figures, very graceful, brilliant, occasionally full of grace and glowing brightness blended in the softest composure; in fact, a deep sincere love of the beautiful in Nature and Man, and the readiest faculty of expressing this by imagination and by word. No fresher paintings of Nature can be found than Scott's; hardly anywhere a wider sympathy with man. From Davie Deans up to Richard Cœur-de-Lion; from Meg Merrilies to Die Vernon and Queen Elizabeth! It is the utterance of a man of open soul; of a brave, large, free-seeing man, who has a true brother-

hood with all men. In joyous picturesqueness and fellow-feeling, freedom of eye and heart; or to say it in a word, in general *hospitium* of mind, these Novels prove Scott to have been amongst the foremost writers.

Neither in the higher and highest excellence, of drawing character, is he at any time altogether deficient; though at no time can we call him, in the best sense, successful. His Baillie Jaries, Dimmons, Dalgetys (for their name is legion), do look and talk like what they give themselves out for; they are, if not *created* and made poetically alive, yet *deceptively enacted* as a good player might do them. What more is wanted, then? For the reader lying on a sofa, nothing more; yet for another sort of reader, much. It were a long chapter to unfold the difference in drawing a character between a Scott, and a Shakspeare, a Goethe. Yet it is a difference literally immense; they are of different species; the value of the one is not to be counted in the coin of the other. We might say in a short word, which means a long matter, that your Shakspeare fashions his characters from the heart outwards; your Scott fashions them from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them! The one set become living men and women; the other amount to little more than mechanical cases, deceptively painted automations. Compare Fennella with Goethe's Mignon, which, it was once said, Scott had "done Goethe the honour" to borrow. He has borrowed what he could of Mignon. The small stature, the



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and men ask, Is this what it can do? Scott, we reckon, carried several things to their ultimatum and crisis, so that change became inevitable: a great service, though an indirect one. Secondly, however, we may say, these Historical Novels have taught all men this truth, which looks like a truism, and yet was as good as unknown to writers of history and others, till so taught: that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state-papers, controversies and abstractions of men. Not abstractions were they, not diagrams and theorems; but men, in buff or other coats and breeches, with colour in their cheeks, with passions in their stomach, and the idioms, features and vitalities of very men: It is a little word this; inclusive of great meaning! History will henceforth have to take thought of it. Her faint heart-says of "philosophy teaching by experience" will have to exchange themselves everywhere for direct inspection and embodiment: this, and this only, will be counted experience; and till once experience have got it, philosophy will reconcile herself to wait at the door. It is a great service, fertile in consequences, this that Scott has done; a great truth laid open by him;—correspondent indeed to the substantial nature of the man; to his solidity and veracity even of imagination, which, with all his lively discursiveness, was the characteristic of him.

A word here as to the extempore style of writing, which is getting much celebrated in

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these days. Scott seems to have been a high proficient in it. His rapidity was extreme; and the matter produced was excellent, considering that: the circumstances under which some of his Novels, when he could not himself write, were dictated, are justly considered wonderful. It is a valuable faculty this of ready-writing; nay farther, for Scott's purpose it was clearly the only good mode. By much labour he could not have added one guinea to his copyright; nor could the reader on the sofa have lain a whit more at ease. It was in all ways necessary that these works should be produced rapidly; and, round or not, be thrown-off like Giotto's O. But indeed, in all things, writing or other, which a man engages in, there is the indispensablest beauty in knowing *how to get done*. A man frets himself to no purpose; he has not the sleight of the trade; he is not a craftsman, but an unfortunate borer and bungler, if he know not when to have done. Perfection is unattainable: no carpenter ever made a mathematically accurate right-angle in the world; yet all carpenters know when it is right enough, and do not botch it, and lose their wages, by making it too right. Too much pains-taking speaks disease in one's mind, as well as too little. The adroit sound-minded man will endeavour to spend on each business approximately what of pains it deserves; and with a conscience void of remorse will dismiss it then. All this in favour of easy writing shall be granted, and, if need were, enforced and inculcated. And yet, on the other hand, it

shall not less but more strenuously be incultured, that in the way of writing, no great thing was ever, or will ever be done with ease, but with difficulty! Let ready-writers with any faculty in them lay this to heart. Is it with ease, or not with ease, that a man shall *do his best*, in any shape; above all, in this shape justly named of "soul's travail", working in the deep places of thought, embodying the True out of the Obscure and Possible, envired on all sides with the uncreated False? Not so, now or at any time. The experience of all men belies it; the nature of things contradicts it. Virgil and Tacitus, were they ready-writers? The whole *Prophecies of Isaiah* are not equal in extent to this cobweb of a Review Article. Shakspeare, we may fancy, wrote with rapidity; but not till he had thought with intensity: long and sore had this man thought, as the seeing eye may discern well, and had dwelt and wrestled amid dark pains and throes,—though his great soul is silent about all that. It was for him to write rapidly at fit intervals, being ready to do it. And herein truly lies the secret of the matter: such swiftness of mere writing, after due energy of preparation, is doubtless the right method; the hot furnace having long worked and simmered, let the pure gold flow out at one gush. It was Shakspeare's plan; no easy writer he, or he had never been a Shakspeare. Neither was Milton one of the mob of gentlemen that write with ease; he did not attain Shakspeare's faculty, one perceives, of even writing fast *after*

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long preparation, but struggled while he wrote. Goethe also tells us he "had nothing sent him in his sleep"; no page of his but he knew well how it came there. It is reckoned to be the best prose, accordingly, that has been written by any modern. Schiller, as an unfortunate and unhealthy man, "*könnte nie fertig werden*, never could get done"; the noble genius of him struggled not wisely but too well, and wore his life itself heroically out: Or did Petrarch write easily? Dante sees himself "growing lean" over his *Divine Comedy*; in stern solitary death-wrestle with it, to prevail over it, and do it, if his uttermost faculty may: hence, too, it is done and prevailed over, and the fiery life of it endures for evermore among men. No: creation, one would think, cannot be easy; your Jove has severe pains, and fire-flames, in the head out of which an armed Pallas is struggling! As for manufacture, that is a different matter, and may become easy or not easy, according as it is taken up. Yet of manufacture too, the general truth is that, given the manufacturer, it will be worthy in direct proportion to the pains bestowed upon it; and worthless always, or nearly so, with no pains. Cease, therefore, O ready-writer, to brag openly of thy rapidity and facility; to thee (if thou be in the manufacturing line) it is a benefit, an increase of wages; but to me it is sheer loss, worsening of my pennyworth: why wilt thou brag of it to me? Write easily, by steam if thou canst contrive it, and canst sell it; but hide it like virtue! "Easy writing", said Sheridan, "is



sometimes d—d hard reading." Sometimes, and always it is sure to be rather useless reading, which indeed (to a creature of few years and much work) may be reckoned the hardest of all.

Scott's productive facility amazed everybody; and set Captain Hall, for one, upon a very strange method of accounting for it without miracle;—for which see his Journal, above quoted from. The Captain, on counting line for line, found that he himself had written in that Journal of his almost as much as Scott, at odd hours in a given number of days; "and as for the invention," says he, "it is known that this costs Scott nothing, but comes to him of its own accord". Convenient indeed! —But for us too Scott's rapidity is great, is a proof and consequence of the solid health of the man, bodily and spiritual; great, but un-miraculous; not greater than that of many others besides Captain Hall. Admire it, yet with measure. For observe always, there are two conditions in work: let me fix the quality, and you shall fix the quantity! Any man may get through work rapidly who easily satisfies himself about it. Print the *will* of any man. There will be a thick octavo volume daily; make his writing three times as good as his talk, there will be the third part of a volume daily, which still is good work. To write with never such rapidity in a passable manner, is indicative not of a man's genius, but of his habits; it will prove his soundness of nervous system, his practicality of mind, and in fine,

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that he has the knack of his trade. In the most flattering view, rapidity will betoken health of mind: much also, perhaps most of all, will depend on health of body. Doubt it not, a faculty of easy writing is attainable by man! The human genius, once fairly set in this direction, will carry it far. William Cobbett, one of the healthiest of men, was a greater improviser even than Walter Scott: his writing, considered as to quality and quantity, of Rural Rides, Registers, Grammars, Sermons, Peter Porcupines, Histories of Reformation, ever-fresh denouncements of Potatoes and Paper-money,—seems to us still more wonderful. Pierre Bayle wrote enormous folios, one sees not on what motive-principle; he flowed-on forever, a mighty tide of ditch-water; and even died flowing, with the pen in his hand. But indeed the most unaccountable ready-writer of all is, probably, the common Editor of a Daily Newspaper. Consider his leading articles; what they treat of, how passably they are done. Straw that has been thrashed a hundred times without wheat; ephemeral sound of a sound; such portent of the hour as all men have seen a hundred times turn out inane: how a man, with merely human faculty, buckles himself nightly with new vigour and interest to this thrashed straw, nightly thrashes it anew, nightly gets-up new thunder about it; and so goes on thrashing and thundering for a considerable series of years; this is a fact remaining still to be accounted for, in human physiology. The vitality of man is great.

Or shall we say, Scott, among the many things he carried towards their ultimum and crisis, carried this of ready-writing too, that so all men might better see what was in it? It is a valuable consummation. Not without results;—results, at some of which Scott as a Tory politician would have greatly shuddered. For if once Printing have grown to be as Talk, then DEMOCRACY (if we look into the roots of things) is not a bugbear and probability, but a certainty, and event as good as come! “In-avoidable seems it me.” But leaving this, sure enough the triumph of ready-writing appears to be even now; everywhere the ready-writer is found bragging strangely of his readiness. In a late translated *Don Carlos*, one of the most indifferent translations ever done with any sign of ability, a hitherto unknown individual is found assuring his reader, “The reader will possibly think it an excuse, when I assure him that the whole piece was completed within the space of ten weeks, that is to say, between the sixth of January and the eighteenth of March of this year (inclusive of a fortnight’s interruption from over-exertion); that I often translated twenty pages a-day, and that the fifth act was the work of five days.” O hitherto unknown individual, what is it to me what time it was the work of, whether five days or five decades of years? The only question is, How hast thou done it?—So, however, it stands: the genius of Extempore irresistibly lording it, advancing on us like ocean-tides, like Noah’s deluges—of ditch-water! The prospect seems

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one of the lamentablest. To have all Literature swim away from us in watery Extempore, and a spiritual time of Noah supervene? That surely is an awful reflection; worthy of dyspeptic Matthew Bramble in a London fog! Be of comfort, O splenetic Matthew; it is not Literature they are swimming away; it is only Book-publishing and Book-selling. Was there not a Literature *before* Printing or Faust of Mentz, and yet men wrote extempore? Nay, before Writing or Cadmus of Thebes, and yet men spoke extempore? Literature is the Thought of thinking Souls; this, by the blessing of God, can in no generation be swum away, but remains with us to the end.

Scott's career, of writing impromptu novels to buy farms with, was not of a kind to terminate voluntarily, but to accelerate itself more and more; and one sees not to what wise goal it could, in any case, have led him. Bookseller Constable's bankruptcy was not the ruin of Scott; his ruin was, that ambition, and even false ambition, had laid hold of him; that his way of life was not wise. Whither could it lead? Where could it stop? New farms there remained ever to be bought, while new novels could pay for them. More and more success but gave more and more appetite, more and more audacity. The impromptu writing must have waxed ever thinner; declined faster and faster into the questionable category, into the condemnable, into the generally condemned. Already there existed, in secret, everywhere



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have been all in the wrong, and this my fame and pride, now broken, was an empty delusion and spell of accursed witchcraft! It was difficult for flesh and blood! He said, I will retrieve myself, and make my point good yet, or die for it. Silently, like a proud strong man, he girt himself to the Hercules' task, of removing rubbish-mountains, since that was it; of paying large ransoms by what he could still write and sell. In his declining years too; misfortune is doubly and trebly unfortunate that befalls us then. Scott fell to his Hercules' task like a very man, and went on with it unweariedly; with a noble cheerfulness, while his life-strings were cracking, he grappled with it, and wrestled with it, years long, in death-grips, strength to strength;—and it proved the stronger; and his life and heart did crack and break: the cordage of a most strong heart! Over these last writings of Scott, his *Napoleons*, *Demonologies*, *Scotch Histories*, and the rest, criticism, finding still much to wonder at, much to commend, will utter no word of blame; this one word only, Woe is me! The noble war-horse that once laughed at the shaking of the spear, how is he doomed to toil himself dead, dragging ignoble wheels! Scott's descent was like that of a spent projectile; rapid, straight down;—perhaps mercifully so. It is a tragedy, as all life is; one proof more that Fortune stands on a restless globe; that Ambition, literary, warlike, politic, pecuniary, never yet profited any man.

Our last extract shall be from Volume Sixth;

a very tragical one. Tragical, yet still beautiful; waste Ruin's havoc borrowing a kind of sacredness from a yet sterner visitation, that of Death! Scott has withdrawn into a solitary lodging-house in Edinburgh, to do daily the day's work there; and had to leave his wife at Abbotsford in the last stage of disease. He went away silently; looked silently at the sleeping face he scarcely hoped ever to see again. We quote from a Diary he had begun to keep in those months, on hint from Byron's *Ravenna Journal*: copious sections of it render this Sixth Volume more interesting than any of the former ones:

"*Abbotsford, May 11 (1826).*— \* \* \* It withers my heart to think of it, and to recollect that I can hardly hope again to seek confidence and counsel from that ear, to which all might be safely confided. But in her present lethargic state, what would my attendance have availed?—and Anne has promised close and constant intelligence. I must dine with James Ballantyne today *en famille*. I cannot help it; but would rather be at home and alone. However, I can go out too. I will not yield to the barren sense of hopelessness which struggles to invade me.

"*Edinburgh, Mrs. Brown's lodgings, North St. David Street—May 12.*—I passed a pleasant day with kind J. B., which was a great relief from the black dog, which would have worried me at home. He was quite alone.

"Well, here I am in Arden. And I may say with Touchstone, 'When I was at home I was in a better place'; I must, when there is occasion, draw to my own Baillie Nicol Jarvie's consolation—'One cannot carry the comforts of the Saut-

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Market about with one'. Were I at ease in mind, I think the body is very well cared for. Only one other lodger in the house, a Mr. Shandy,—a clergyman, and, despite his name, said to be a quiet one."

"*May* 14.—A fair good-morrow to you, Mr. Sun, who are slining so brightly on these dull walls. Methinks you look as if you were looking as bright on the banks of the Tweed; but look where you will, Sir Sun, you look upon sorrow and suffering.—Hogg was here yesterday, in danger, from having obtained an accommodation of £100 from James Ballantyne, which he is now obliged to repay. I am unable to help the poor fellow, being obliged to borrow myself."

"*May* 15.—Received the melancholy intelligence that all is over at Abbotsford."

"*Abbotsford, May* 16.—She died at nine in the morning, after being very ill for two days—easy at last. I arrived here late last night. Anne is worn out, and has had hysterics, which returned on my arrival. Her broken accents were like those of a child, the language as well as the tones broken, but in the most gentle voice of submission. 'Poor mamma—never return again—gone forever—a better place.' Then, when she came to herself, she spoke with sense, freedom and strength of mind, till her weakness returned. It would have been inexpressibly moving to me as a stranger—what was it then to the father and the husband? For myself, I scarce know how I feel; sometimes as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the water that breaks on it. I am as alert at thinking and deciding as I ever was in my life. Yet, when I contrast what this place now is, with what it has been not long since, I think my heart will break. Lonely, aged, deprived of my family—all but poor Anne; an impoverished, an embarrassed man, deprived of the sharer of my thoughts and counsels, who could always talk-down my sense of the calamitous appre-



hensions which break the heart that must bear them alone.—Even her foibles were of service to me, by giving me things to think of beyond my weary self-reflections.

“I have seen her. The figure I beheld is, and is not my Charlotte—my thirty-years companion. There is the same symmetry of form, though those limbs are rigid which were once so gracefully elastic—but that yellow mask, with pinched features, which seems to mock life rather than emulate it, can it be the face that was once so full of lively expression? I will not look on it again. Anne thinks her little changed, because the latest idea she had formed of her mother is as she appeared under circumstances of extreme pain. Mine go back to a period of comparative ease. If I write long in this way, I shall write-down my resolution, which I should rather write-up, if I could.”

“*May* 18.—\* \* \* Cerements of lead and of wood already hold her; cold earth must have her soon. But it is not my Charlotte, it is not the bride of my youth, the mother of my children, that will be laid among the ruins of Dryburgh, which we have so often visited in gaiety and pastime. No, no.”

“*May* 22.—\* \* \* Well, I am not apt to shrink from that which is my duty, merely because it is painful; but I wish this funeral-day over. A kind of cloud of stupidity hangs about me, as if all were unreal that men seem to be doing and talking.”

“*May* 26.—\* \* \* Were an enemy coming upon my house, would I not do my best to fight, although oppressed in spirits; and shall a similar despondency prevent me from mental exertion? It shall not, by Heaven!”

“*Edinburgh, May* 30.—Returned to town last night with Charles. This morning resume ordinary habits of rising early, working in the morning, and attending the Court. \* \* \* I finished correcting the proofs for the Quarterly; it is but a flimsy article,

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

but then the circumstances were most untoward.— This has been a melancholy day—most melancholy. I am afraid poor Charles found me weeping. I do not know what other folks feel, but with me the hysterical passion that impels tears is a terrible violence—a sort of throttling sensation—then succeeded by a state of dreaming stupidity, in which I ask if my poor Charlotte can actually be dead.”

This is beautiful as well as tragical. Other scenes, in that Seventh Volume, must come, which will have no beauty, but be tragical only. It is better that we are to end here.

And so the curtain falls; and the strong Walter Scott is with us no more. A possession from him does remain; widely scattered; yet attainable; not inconsiderable. It can be said of him, When he departed, he took a Man's life along with him. No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of Time. Alas, his fine Scotch face, with its shaggy honesty, sagacity and goodness, when we saw it latterly on the Edinburgh streets, was all worn with care, the joy all fled from it;—ploughed deep with labour and sorrow. We shall never forget it; we shall never see it again. Adieu, Sir Walter, pride of all Scotchmen, take our proud and sad farewell.



# NOTES BY THE AUTHOR

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## GOLTHE

9. *Commentaries have been written.* See in particular, Dr. Konradt's *Ueber Goethes Hainstadt im Jahre, 1820.* at

11. *Even in France.* Witness *Le Taux*, *Drame* [22] *Daucl*, and the Criticisms on it. See also the *Essays* in the *Globe*, Nos. 55, 64 (1826).

18. *Continues to live.* Since this was written, that worthy Prince, -worthy, we have understood, in all respects, exemplary in whatever concerned Literature and the Arts, -has been called suddenly away. He died on his road from Berlin, near Torgau, on the 24th of June.

29. *That the life of man is but a dream, &c.* *Leiden des jungen Werther.* Am 22 Mai.

31. *Such weariness of life, &c.* *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, vol. iii, pp. 200-213.

32. *One of our most distinguished men.* Lessing, we believe: but perhaps it was less the greenness of spring that vexed him, than Jacobi's too lyrical admiration of it.

40. *Look at men, &c.* *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, book ii. chap. 2.

45. *Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen ass:-*

"Who never ate his bread in sorrow,  
Who never spent the darksome hours

Weeping and watching for the morrow,

"He knows you not ye unseen Power."

*Wilhelm Meiser*, book ii. chap. 13.

47. *Wilhelm Meiser's Wanderjahre*. "Wander-jahre denotes the period which a German artisan is, by law or usage, obliged to pass in travelling, to perfect himself in his craft, after the conclusion of his *Lehrjahre* (Apprenticeship), and before his *Meisterthum* can begin. In many guilds this custom is as old as their existence, and continues still to be indispensable: it is said to have originated in the frequent journeys of the German Emperors to Italy, and the consequent improvement observed in such workmen among their masters as had attended them thither. Most of the guilds are what is called *geschenken*, that is, *presenting*, having presents to give to needy wandering brothers."

## BURNS

147. *Picturesque Tourists*. "There is one little sketch by certain 'English gentlemen' of this class, which, though adopted in Currier's narrative, and since then repeated in most others, we have all along felt an invincible disposition to regard as imaginary: 'On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of fox-skin on his head, a loose greatcoat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous High-land broadsword. It was Burns.' Now, we rather think, it was *not* Burns. For, to say nothing of the fox-skin cap, the loose and quite Hibernian watchcoat with the belt, what are we to make of this 'enormous High-land broadsword' depending from him? More especially, as there is no word of parish constables on the outlook to see whether, as Dennis phrases it, he had an eye to his own snuff or that of the public! Burns, of all men, had the least need, and the least tendency, to seek for distinction, either in his own eyes, or those of others, by such poor mummeries."

150. *where bitter indignation. Ubi cæva indignatio*  
*cor ulterius lacerare nequit.* Swift's Epitaph.

# NOTES

## BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

182. *gigmanity*. "Q. What do you mean by 'respectable'?"—A. He always kept a gig." (*Thurtell's Trial*.)—"Thus", it has been said, "does society naturally divide itself into four classes: Noblemen, Gentlemen, Gigmen, and Men."

225. *my Work*. The *English Dictionary*.  
*without one act of assistance*. Were time and printer's space of no value, it were easy to wash away certain foolish soot-stains dropped here as "Notes"; especially two: the one on this word [*assistance*], and on Boswell's Note to it; the other on the paragraph which follows. Let "En." look a second time; he will find that Johnson's sacred regard for *Truth* is the only thing to be "noted", in the former case; also, in the latter, that this of "Love's being a native of the rocks" actually has a "meaning".

229. *children almost of the same year*. Johnson, September, 1709; Hume, April, 1711.

240. *a place we can "never pass without veneration"*. All Johnson's places of resort and abode are venerable, and now indeed to the many as well as to the few; for his name has become great; and, as we must often with a kind of sad admiration recognise, there is, even to the rudest man, no greatness so venerable as intellectual, as spiritual greatness; nay properly there is no other venerable at all. For example, what soul-subduing magic, for the very clown or craftsman of our England, lies in the word "Scholar"! "He is a Scholar": *He is a man wiser than we; of a wisdom to us boundless, infinite: who shall speak his worth!* Such things, we say, fill us with a certain pathetic admiration of defaced and obstructed yet glorious man; archangel though in ruins,—or rather, though in *rubbish*, of encumbrances and mud-incrustations, which also are not to be perpetual. Nevertheless, in this mad-whirling all-forgetting London, the haunts of the mighty that were can seldom without a strange difficulty be discovered. Will any man, for instance, tell us which *bricks* it was in Lincoln's



haviour towards him. *Shandy*, so high this remarkable cocker, was extremely shy of strangers: promenading on Prince's Street, which in fine weather used to be crowded in those days, he seemed to live in perpetual fear of being stolen; if any one but looked at him admiringly, he would draw back with angry timidity, and crouch towards his own lady-mistress. One day a tall, irregular-looking man came halting by; the little dog ran looking him, began fawning, frisking, licking at his feet Sir Walter Scott! Had *Shandy* been the most reader of Reviews, he could not have done better time he saw Sir Walter afterwards, which was three or four times in the course of visiting Edinburgh he repeated his demonstrations, ran leaping, frisking, licking the Author of *Waverley's* feet. The good Walter endured it with good-humour; looked down the little wise face, at the silky shag-coat of snow-white and chestnut-brown; smiled, and avoided hitting him as they went on,—till a new division of streets or some other obstacle put an end to the interview. In fact he was a strange little fellow, this *Shandy*. He has been known to sit for hours looking out at the summer noon, with the saddest, wistfullest expression of countenance; altogether like a Werterean Poet. He would have been a Poet, I daresay, if he could have found a publisher. But his moral tact was the most amazing. Without reason shown, without word spoken or act done, he took his likings and dislikings; unalterable; really almost unerring. His chief aversion, I should say, was to the genus *quack*, above all to the genus *acid-quack*; these, though never so clear-starched, bland-smiling and beneficent, he absolutely would have no trade with. Their very sugar-cake was unavailing. He said with emphasis, as clearly as barking could say it: '*Acrid-quack, avaunt!*' Would to Heaven many a prime-minister, and high person in authority, had such an invaluable talent! On the whole, there is more in this universe than our philosophy has dreamt of. A dog's instinct is a voice of Nature too: and farther, it has never babbled itself away in idle jargon and hypothesis, but always adhered to the practical, and grown in silence by continual communion with fact. We do the animals



injustice. Their body resembles our body, Buffon says; with its four limbs, with its spinal marrow, main organs in the head and so forth: but have they not a kind of soul, equally the rude draught and imperfect imitation of ours? It is a strange, an almost solemn and pathetic thing to see an intelligence imprisoned in that dumb rude form; struggling to express itself out of that;—even as we do out of our imprisonment; and succeed very imperfectly!”

354. *the work of five days.* *Don Carlos*, a Dramatic Poem, from the German of Schiller. Mannheim and London, 1837.

The Text of this edition of *Carlyle's Essays* has been revised and the Notes have been prepared, by Mr. W. Keith Leask, late Scholar of Worcester College, Oxford.



# NOTES

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## GOETHE

This Essay first appeared in Vol. I, pp. 80-127 of the *Foreign Review* for 1828. "Carlyle's enthusiasm for German literature, at first well-nigh all-embracing, gradually resolved itself mainly into enthusiasm for Goethe. Except in the capital points of love of efficiency and hatred of anarchy, two men more superficially dissimilar could not well have been found, and the Scotchman's reverence for the German has excited surprise. His own explanation to Emerson was: 'His is the only healthy mind, of any extent, that I have discovered in Europe for long generations'. He honoured Goethe as a deliverer, as one who had given him what he could not have given himself. He needed an example of repose attained through conflict, and he found it in Goethe. In most English minds there either had been no conflict, or there was no repose. 'It can never be forgotten,' he afterwards wrote to Goethe, 'that to you I owe the all-precious knowledge and experience that Reverence is still possible: that, instead of conjecturing and denying, I can again believe and know.'" (Dr. Richard Garnett.)

Pages 2 and 3. *Sign of the Saracen's Head*. The servant of Sir Roger de Coverley "put him up as a sign-post before the door, so that *The Knight's Head* had hung out upon the road...accordingly they got a painter to add a pair of whiskers to the face, and by a little aggravation to the features to change it into *The Saracen's Head*" (*Spectator*, No. 122).

3. *in early life*. His *Götz* was published in 1773 and the *Sorrows of Werther* in 1774. Goethe was born on August 28, 1749.



## NOTES

7. *Musagetes*: Leader of the Muses; an epithet of Apollo.

*Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*), the first two parts of which appeared in 1811, the third in 1814. The fourth he did not finish until 1831. "His object was to describe the influences under which his character both as a man and as a writer was formed. Some details of the narrative are incorrect, but that his reminiscences are substantially accurate we know from the fact that they accord in the main with his early works and letters. Goethe's intellectual relations even in youth were so far-reaching that *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is much more than a record of his personal experience. It contains a full and most vivid account of all the great currents of thought and feeling in Germany during an important transitional period in the history of her literature" (James Sims: *Life of Goethe*, p. 167).

8. *head and front of his offending*. *Othello*, i. 3. 80.

10. *Memoirs of Goethe*. *Memoirs of Goethe*: written by himself; 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1824.

*Dragoman*. Courier or attendant on travellers in Egypt and East. "What Herodotus professes to tell us of the history of Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia, is really a collection of *Märchen*, or popular stories, current among the Greek loungers and half-caste *dragomen* on the skirts of the Persian Empire" (Prof. Sayce: *Herodotus*, p. 12).

12. *betrumpered and beshouted*. A favourite coinage of Carlyle. "Yesterday I dined with lord treasurer and his Saturday people as usual; and was so *bedeanned*" (Swift: *Journal to Stella*, April 7, 1713).

13. *Schlegels*. August William Schlegel (1767-1845), critic and philologist, Professor of History at Bonn; brother of Frederick Schlegel (1772-1829), author of *Philosophy of History*, &c. Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1875), Italian poet, novelist, and patriot, friend of Garibaldi, and author of the famous novel *I Promessi Sposi*. Madame De Stael (1766-1811), daughter of Necker, minister of finance under Louis XVI, writer of *Corinne*, *Delphine*, &c.

14. *Goethe's poetry is no separate faculty, &c.* "The true genius", Johnson decided, "is a mind of large, general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction." Dugald Stewart said of Burns: "*All the faculties were equally vigorous, and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition*"; and Carlyle (*Essay on Burns*) adds: "Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed, maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature, is *no separate faculty*, no organ which can be super-added to the rest, or disjoined by them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion". This is a cardinal position of our author. "Poetry", he says of Schiller, "was not the 'lean and flashy song' of an ear apt for harmony, combined with a maudlin sensibility; it was, what true poetry is always, the quintessence of general mental riches, the purified result of strong thought and conception, and of refined as well as powerful emotion."
- Wordsworth.* So Tennyson, also, later, was wholly devoted through life to Poetry.
17. *Tenison*: Archbishop of Cambray (1651-1715), and writer of *The Adventures of Telemachus*.
18. *boundless influence and popularity.* "Few books have ever produced so strong a sensation almost everywhere in Germany. *Werther* was received with mingled astonishment and delight. They found in the tale a voice that gave utterance to much that they themselves had been feeling, and many of them not only shed hot tears for *Werther's* fate, but affected his modes of expression, and even dressed as he had dressed—in blue coat, yellow vest, yellow hose, and top-boots. By and by the book was translated into almost every European language, and in far Cathay *Werther* and Lotte were painted on glass by native artists" (James Sims). Cf. the influence of Bulwer Lytton's *Pelham*, whose dandy airs and black coat became the regulation "evening-dress" coat, replacing the bottle-green of the day.

## NOTES

19. *bad effects*. E.g. on morbid natures. Macaulay notes the same of Byron: "Many practised at the glass in the hope of catching the curl of the upper lip, and the scowl of the brow, which appear in some of his portraits. A few discarded their neckcloths in imitation of their great leader. The number of hopeful undergraduates and medical students who became things of dark imaginings, whose passions had consumed themselves to dust, passes all imagination. There was associated in the minds of many of these enthusiasts a pernicious and absurd association between intellectual power and moral depravity—to hate your neighbour, and to love your neighbour's wife" (Moore's *Life of Lord Byron*). Cf. the inimitable Chapter XL of Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*: "Who does know", Waggle would say, "that fellow's intrigues! Desborough Wiggle, sir, is the slave of passion, &c. &c." *Scott's first literary enterprise*. Goetz von Berlichingen of the Iron Hand, 1799.

20. *our current (English) version of Werter...* French. *The Sorrows of Werter*: a German story. Translated from the French edition of M. Aubry by J. Gifford; 2 vols., London, 1789, 8vo.

*Mitschuldigen*. *The Accomplices*. "It contains an unpleasant picture of facts akin to those which were forced on his attention at Frankfort in connection with the incident that led to his separation from Gretchen. It is written in rhymed Alexandrines, and shows that Goethe, like most of his contemporaries, still looked for his models to the French classic drama" (James Sime).

21. *Ramler*. *Karl Wilhelm Ramler* (1725-1798), German poet, known as the national Horace, as *Klopstock*, the author of the *Messiah*, was known as the German Milton—"a very German Milton", said Coleridge sarcastically; *Gotthold Wilhelm Rabener* (1714-1771), satirist and controller of taxes at Leipsic; *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing* (1729-1781), critic, dramatist, and miscellaneous writer; author of *Minna von Barnhelm*, *Nathan the Wise*, *Laocöon*, &c.

*mirror up to Nature*. *Hamlet*, iii. 2.



21. *Castle of Otranto*. By Horace Walpole. "An accident of that half-understood devotion to 'the gothic' which was common at the time, and of which Walpole, as a dilettante, if not a sincere disciple, was one of the chief English exponents" (Saintsbury).
- Epigoniad*. The Epic, published in 1757, by William Wilkie, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews. It deals with the story of the Epigoni, the descendants of the seven against Thebes.
- Leonidas*. The Epic in 1737 of Richard Glover (1712-1785), poet and dramatist.
22. *Caractacus and Cato*. The characters in the play of that name, in 1759, by Mason, the friend of Gray, and in Addison's drama.
- a few un-natural tears*, &c. "Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon" (*Paradise Lost*, xii. 645).
- Goldsmitli*, &c. "His mind resembled a fertile but thin soil. There was a quick, but not a strong vegetation, of whatever chanced to be thrown upon it. No deep root could be struck. The oak of the forest did not grow there; but the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre appeared in gay succession" (Boswell).
- Laputa*: the flying island inhabited by scientific pretenders. In *Gulliver's Travels* they are represented as so abstracted in study as to need attendants, or "flappers", to draw their attention to matters of ordinary interest.
23. *Locke*. "To no single man is that obstinate Philistinism of thought and expression, which is the besetting sin of eighteenth-century literature, due so much as to Locke. The dignity, indeed, of his subject, his genuine learning, his modesty, his intellectual acumen kept him from being actually vulgar. But he was the cause of infinite vulgarity in others" (Saintsbury).
24. *French had discovered*. The doctrine of Pierre Jean George Cabanis (1757-1807), the friend of Mirabeau; His fame rests on his ultra-materialistic conception that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile.

22. *birthday odes, &c. &c.* For a specimen of the Royal Odes served up to Royalty, to "George", "great Caesar", "Charlotte", and the "House of Brunswick", see the Globe Edition of Cowper, pp. 66-67. "Only think", said the Duke of Buccleuch to Scott, when he refused the laureateship, "of being chaunted and recitativèd by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishop's, pages, maids of honour, and gentlemen pensioners! Oh horrible, thrice horrible!"

*Tyrtæus*: the Spartan poet who incited his countrymen to victory in the Messenian Wars.

26. *Harmattan*: the hot wind, charged with dust, blowing on the Atlantic and Guinea coasts from December to February.

*Tree of Life*. For Carlyle's constant contrast of the figure of the "Tree of Life", Igdrazil, the Tree of Existence, with the Benthamite, materialistic conception of the "Machine of the Universe", see *Heroes: The Hero as Divinity*.

*malady of Thought*. "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" (*Hamlet*, iii. i. 85).

27. *local habitation and a name*. *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, v. i. 17.

28. *like dog distract*. *Hudibras*:

"More peevish, cross, and splenetic,  
Than dog distract or monkey sick".

37. *Anarchy has now become Peace*. "The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold thou art fatherless, outcast, and the universe is mine (the Devil's); to which my whole Me had made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free and forever hate thee'" (*Sartor Resartus*—in whose phraseology the mind of Goethe had passed from the Everlasting No, or the spirit of scepticism, through the Centre of Indifference, to the Everlasting Yea, or Spirit of Belief).

*Galgacus's Romans*. The famous phrase of Galgacus in Tacitus' *Agricola*, ch. xxx: "Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant".

# NOTES

38. many-coloured existence.

"Each change of many-coloured life he drew,  
Exhausted worlds and then imagined new".

—Johnson (of Shakespeare), 1747.

43. translated into English. William Meister's  
*Apprenticeship: A Novel*. Translated by T. Carlyle,  
3 vols. Edinburgh, 1824.

*Assaying-house*: the mint, where the coin was  
tested and essayed, tried.

*Minerva Press*, in Leadenhall street, at the begin-  
ning of the century, issuing fashionable novels. "For  
some years", says Macaulay about Byron, "the Minerva  
Press sent forth no novel without a mysterious, un-  
happy, Lारा-like peer."

*Friedrich d'or*. Cf. 'Louis d'or', a 'Jacobus', a  
'Napoleon', the classical Daries, and 'Philips' coined  
by Alexander the Great's father from his Thracian gold  
mines.

46. *Novalis*. Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772-1801),  
discussed by Carlyle in his essay on that writer. *Jeremy  
Bentham* (1748-1832), philosopher and jurist of the  
Utilitarian School. "Benthamic utility, virtue by Profit  
and Loss, reducing this God's-world to a dead brute  
Steam-engine, the celestial Soul of Man to a kind of  
Hay-balance for weighing hay and thistles on, pleasures  
and pains on. Such is my deliberate opinion. (*Heroes  
and Hero Worship*.)

47. *Tieck*. Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), German  
poet, critic, and writer of the Romantic School.

49. *pageants of Prospero*. *Tempest*, iv. i. 150-156.  
*Titian* (1477-1576), head of the Venetian School;  
*Doménichino* (1581-1561), of the Carracci School;  
*Refuëlle* (1483-1520), of the Roman.

50. *these chapters*. "I read it through many years  
ago; and, of course, I had to read into it very hard when  
I was translating it, and it has always dwell in my mind  
as about the most remarkable bit of writing that I have  
known to be executed in these late centuries. I have

# NOTES

often said, there are ten pages of that which, if ambition had been my only rule, I would rather have written than have written all the books that have appeared since I came into the world." For the whole passage, and its interpretation of the extracts here given, see Carlyle's "Rectorial Address to the students of the University of Edinburgh", April 2, 1866.

65. *Science*. For Goethe's scientific work and an estimate, see Sime's *Life*, pp. 101, 129, 179.

66. *Quarles*. Francis Quarles (1592-1644), writer of *Emblems*, a series of designs in print with illustrative verses.

67. *Byron may also be said, &c.* "He was himself the beginning, the middle, and the end, of all his own poetry, the hero of every tale, the chief object in every landscape. Harold, Lara, Manfred, and a crowd of other characters, were universally considered merely as loose incognitos of Byron; and there is every reason to believe that he meant them to be so considered" (Macaulay).

77. "*critic fly*". "There have been in all ages, and in all there will be, sharp and slender heads made purposely and peculiarly for creeping into the crevices of our nature. While we contemplate the magnificence of the universe, and mensurate the fitness and adaptation of one part to another, *the small philosopher* hangs upon a hair or creeps within a wrinkle, and cries out shrilly from his elevation that we are blind and superficial. He discovers a wart, he prys into a pore; and he calls it a knowledge of man." (Landon: *Imaginary Conversations*—"Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa".)

*Vitruvius*: Roman writer on architecture under Augustus. *Andrea Palladio* (1518-1580): Italian architect.

83. *Winkelmann*. Johann Winkelmann (1717-1768), German archæologist and writer on Ancient Art.

*Almack's*: rooms in King Street, St. James's, kept by Almack (or Macall, a Scotchman), devoted to balls and fashionable assemblies.

This Essay appeared in *The Edinburgh Review* for December, 1828. It was occasioned by the appearance of Lockhart's *Life of Burns*, issued in May, 1828, as Vol. XXIII. of *Constable's Miscellany*, which was so successful as to be totally disposed of in six weeks. Numerous editions of it have been reprinted, and its value as an authority, close to the period, yet not so close as to miss the focus, is high. Though his reputation is firmly based on his larger work, *The Life of Scott*, the plan and style of his smaller biography, together with his clear and balanced exposition, are calculated to show the skill and masterly touch of Lockhart as a critic and biographer.

85. *Butler*. The author of *Hudibras*. "Praise", says Johnson, "was his sole reward. It is reported that the king once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof."

*brave muscolum*. To which the remains of the poet were transferred on Sept. 12, 1815. The structure, says Lockhart, is more gaudy than elegant.

86. *sixth narrative*. Heron's in 1797, Currie's in 1800, Cromek's in 1808, Walker's in 1811, Peterkin's in 1815, Lockhart's in 1828.

*hero to his valet*. The phrase, a favourite text of our author, is by Voltaire from Montaigne.

*Sir Thomas Lucy and John a Combe* figure in the mythical accounts of Shakspeare's early life, the former as the not improbable original of Justice Shallow. "Tradition says that Shakspeare joined some wild young fellows in breaking into Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote, about three miles from Stratford, and stealing his deer, for which, and for writing an impossible bad ballad against Sir Thomas, the latter so persecuted the poet that he had to leave Stratford" (Furnivall).

87. *Excise Commissioners*, to whom Burns had applied through the Earl of Glencairn, Mr. Graham of Fintry, and others, for a post in the Excise.

## NOTES

87. *Caledonian Hunt*. "Lord Glencairn made interest with the Caledonian Hunt (an association of the most distinguished members of the northern aristocracy) to accept the dedication of the forthcoming edition, and to subscribe individually for copies" (Lockhart).

*My Writers*. E.g., Burns's friends Gavin Hamilton, Robert Aiken, &c.—'writers' being a Scotch term for solicitors, law-agents.

*New and Old Light Clergy*. The more advanced and the conservative sections in theology of the Church of Scotland.

*Dr. Currie*. James Currie, M.D. (1756-1805), the author of the *Life of Burns* prefixed to the *Works* in 4 vols., 1800.

*Mr. Walker*. "Josiah Walker, a countryman and intimate friend of the poet himself, not guiltless of flirtation with the Muse, and afterwards Professor of Latin in the University of Glasgow" (Prof. Blackie). Josiah is a painfully "superior" person, and one would like to have in return the poet's views on the professor, who met Burns in Edinburgh through the medium of Blacklock when he himself was tutor in the Athole family.

91. *Born in an age*. On 25th January, 1759, when there was little creative spirit abroad, and when, like Milton, he might have thought that he had been born "an age too late for heroic poetry"—"the withered, unbelieving, second-hand eighteenth-century, with its artificial pasteboard figures and productions" (Carlyle).

93. *write a tragedy*. "Mr. Ramsay of Auchtertyre on the Teith, a friend of Blacklock, advised him strongly to turn his attention to the romantic drama, and proposed the *Gentle Shepherd* of Allan Ramsay as a model; he also urged him to write *Scottish Georgics*, observing that Thomson had by no means exhausted that field" (Lockhart).

*Sir Hudson Lowe*, K.C.B.: the governor of St. Helena and warder of Napoleon during his detention there.

93. *melancholy man.*

"As when a shepherd of the Hebrides,  
Plac'd far amid the melancholy main."

—Thomson: *Castle of Indolence*, i. 30.

"In the Dutch garden is a fine bronze bust of Napoleon, which Lord Holland put up in 1817 while Napoleon was a prisoner at St. Helena. The inscription was selected by his Lordship, and is remarkably happy. It is from Homer's *Odyssey*. I will translate it extempore:

"In an islet's narrow bound,

With the great Ocean roaring round,

The captive of a foeman base,

He pines to view his native place."

—Macaulay.

*filly and fear*. The subjects, according to Aristotle in his *Poetics*, of tragedy.

96. "quick to learn."

"The poor inhabitant below

Was quick to learn and wise to know,

And keenly felt the friendly glow,

And softer flame;

But thoughtless follies laid him low

And stain'd his name."—Burns.

"Scarcely anything in the tragic story of his later years is more sad than that confession, which appears so early as the first Kilmarnock edition of his poems" (Prof. Blackie).

*quarrelling with smugglers*. "Who can open the page of Burns and remember without a blush that the author was doomed to earn mere bread for his children by casting up the stock of publicans' cellars, and riding over moors and mosses in quest of smuggling stills—a common gauger among the wilds of Nithsdale?" (Lockhart).

98. *Horace's rule*. "If you wish me to weep, you must grieve yourself"; i.e. an author, to impress, must first have felt the impression himself. (Horace: *Artis Poetica*, 102.)

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100. *does not the character of their author.* For this characteristic feature of Byron, see above on the Goethe Essay.

101. *inflated tone.* This is more especially true of the letters to Clarinda, for which the sentimental tone of Sterne, and Henry Mackenzie in *The Man of Feeling*, served Burns as spurious models, "his letters are often full of all sorts of rant and rhodomontade—which to us, reading them coldly in our closets, and but little acquainted, and still less sympathizing with the character of the facetious persons to whom they were written, not unfrequently appears too extravagant for common use. But such stuff suited those to whom it was sent." (Prof. Wilson.) Lockhart practically agrees with this: "to be ascribed to his desire of accommodating himself to the habits and taste of certain buckish tradesmen of Edinburgh and other such like persons. That he should have condescended to any such compliances must be regretted; but, in most cases, it would probably be quite unjust to push our censure further than this."

102. *not master of English prose.* Surely a mistake, even with the limitations stated by Carlyle. No doubt, as Mr. J. Logie Robertson notes, the Kilmarnock Preface is "the worst specimen of Burns's prose that we know, probably written in haste, ungrammatical, tautological, pedantic, and inconsistent"; and in his dedication to the Caledonian Hunt "modern taste is offended with the big initial letters, and the personification of abstract qualities", quite in the Sterne-Rousseau vein. But, on the whole, the style of Burns and his power of phrase are fully as remarkable in his *Letters* as in his verse.

105. "*travels from Dan...all barren*". "I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, 'Tis all barren'" (Sterne; *Sentimental Journey*: "In the street—Calais").

106. *Crockford's.* Like 'Almack's', fashionable assembly-rooms and club.

107. *Theocritus.* "The following trifles are not the productions of the poet who, with all the advantages of



- learned art, and, perhaps amid the elegances and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to *Theocritus* or *Virgil*" (Burns).
108. *burin of a Retzsch*. The charcoal sketch of Moritz Retzsch (1779-1857).
110. *Poussin-picture*. In the style of Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665), the French father of landscape painting.
111. *Professor Stewart*. For Carlyle's view of Dugald Stewart's theory of the poetical faculty, see note on the Goethe Essay.
112. *Shakespeare, it has been well observed*. By Coleridge in his *Table Talk*.
116. "*Indignation makes verses*." "*Facit indignatio versum*" (*Juvenal*, i. 79).
117. *Johnson said...later*. A standard error, the remark not being by Johnson. It was made by his friend Dr. Bathurst, of whom he said: "Dear Bathurst was a man to my very heart's content; he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig; he was a very good hater".
118. *Macpherson's Farewell*. "That grand lyric," as Lockhart previously had seen. James Macpherson, the freebooter, was hanged at the cross of Banff, on November 16, 1700.
- Thebes and in Pelops' line*. The main subjects of Greek Tragedy—"presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line" (Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 99), and dealing with, as Schlegel indicates, the constant struggle of Nemesis or Retribution with human free-will.
120. *seldom aerial, poetical*. "It is not for the love of lovely words, perfections of human utterance, that we revert to Burns. Felicities he has, he has all manners of qualities: wit, fancy, humour, a sort of homespun verbal magic. But, if we be in quest of Beauty, we must even ignore him and fall to our English." (W. E. Henley.)
- Tam o' Shanter*. Here Carlyle agrees with later

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critics that the central passage of *diablerie* in Kirk Alloway is rather incredible, and in preferring *The Jolly Beggars* as his masterpiece, which Burns did not value, and never printed during his lifetime.

122. *blanket of the Night*. "Nor heaven peep through the *blanket of the dark*" (*Macbeth*, i. 5. 53).

*Teniers* (died 1649): the great Dutch painter of rustic life.

*Beggar's Opera*, by Gay, 1727; *The Beggar's Bush*, by John Fletcher, in 1622.

123. *Ossorius*. Geronymo Osorio (1506-1586), "the Cicero of Portugal", born at Lisbon and educated at Salamanca. His *History of Emanuel I* in Latin (Eng. trans., 1752) is famous for the ease and finish of its style.

125. *Fletcher's aphorism*. By Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1653-1716); but in spirit at least it had been made by Plato, in his *Republic*.

126. *Our Grays and Glovers*. See above in the Goethe Essay.

*Thomas Boston* (1677-1732): minister of Ettrick.

127. "*fervid genius*". An allusion to the famous phrase "*præfervidum ingenium Scotorum*". John Hill Burton in the *Scot Abroad* attributes this to Andrew Rivet, a native of Poitou; but he is absurdly wrong: it occurs in Buchanan's *History* xvi. 51, written when Rivet was only a boy of ten.

*our culture was exclusively French*. "The influence of French thought was European. The Scotch, who had a traditional connection with France, were the first importers of the new views. Hume was only three years behind Voltaire in the historic field. *The Age of Louis XIV* was published in 1751, and the first volume of the *History of England* in 1754. But both Hume and Robertson surpassed their masters." (J. C. Morison, *Gibbon*, p. 101.)

*Adam Smith*. This assertion has been often repeated, but Smith was both prior to, and independent of,

the work of François Quernay (1694-1774) and Gabriel de Mably (1709-1785) in the field of political economy.  
127. *La Fliche*, in Anjou, the residence for a time of Hume in France.  
128. "*Doctrine of Rent*." Associated with the name of David Ricardo (1772-1823), who defines rent as "that portion of the produce of the earth which is paid to the landlord for the use of the indestructible powers of the soil".  
131. *the world still appears to him in borrowed colours*.

"This life, sae far's I understand,

Is a' enchanted fairy-land,

Where pleasure is the magic wand

That, wielded right,

Makes hours like minutes, hand in hand,

Dance by, fu' light."

—*Epistle to James Smith*.

132. "*pre-established harmony*". In reference to the theory, of the relation of man to God, by Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715).

134. *threatenings of unjust men...tears*. "My indignation yet boils at the recollection of the scoundrel factor's insolent letters, which used to set us all in tears" (Burns).

135. *in glory and in joy*. Carlyle misquotes Wordsworth's *The Leech Gatherer*:

"I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,

The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;

Of Him who walked in glory and in joy,

Following his plough, along the mountain-side".

"*more exciting society*". "I spent my seventeenth year on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swagging riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me. Here I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble" (Burns). So at Irvine: "He was the only

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man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror" (Burns).

138. *his wild farewell to Scotland*. "That solemn and moving song--far and away the best, I think, and the sincerest thing he left in English--*The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast*" (W. E. Henley).

140. *Virgilium vidi tantum*. "Virgil I merely saw," as Ovid, *Tristia*, iv. 10. 51, remarks of his predecessor, not being old enough to know him.

141. *Print of Bunbury's*. The lines by John Langhorne (1735-1779) in his *Country Justice* (1774-1777) in the manner of Crabbe, referring to the campaign of Minden, and Quebec, the year of Pitt's greatest triumph, 1759.

*I whispered my information*. The late Dr. Grosart informed me that this actual print in the actual frame, as seen by Burns, still exists. It was given by Sir Adam Ferguson, the son of the Professor, to Robert Chambers, and now hangs in the Chambers Institute, Peebles. He drew Chambers's attention to the fact that the name of Langhorne is *lithographed on the print opposite the lines*, and believed Scott derived his knowledge from the actual print, and that long after he had forgotten the source of his information. But Lockhart mentions Scott's early "devotion to Langhorne and Mickle".

142. *Allan Ramsay and Fergusson*. "To the genius of a *Ramsay*, or the glorious dawns of the poor, unfortunate *Fergusson*, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at at their flame, than for servile imitation." (Burns: Preface to *Kilmarnock* edition.)

143. *sharper feeling of Fortune's*, &c. "When I must stalk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim: What merits has he had, or what demerits have I had that he is ushered into this

state of being with the sceptre of rule in his puny fist, and I kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride? Often as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Prince's Street," &c. &c. (Burns.)

145. *his Exercise and Farm scheme*. "I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitations. It is immediate bread, and, though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life. Besides, the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends." (Burns.)

147. *These men were proximately the means of his ruin*. "These men came to see him: it was out of no sympathy with him, nor no hatred to him. They came to get a little amusement: they got their amusement; and the Hero's life went for it." (Carlyle: *Hero as Man of Letters*.)

148. *collision with Superiors*. In sending some guns, captured from a smuggling vessel with a letter to the French Convention, requesting that body to accept of them as a mark of his admiration and respect.

160. *Cervantes in prison*. Carlyle constantly repeats this error about Cervantes, who did not write *Don Quixote* in prison.

*The Araucana*. Alonso Ercilla (1530-1595) joined the expedition sent to Chili against the Araucanians, described in his epic of *La Araucana*.

161. *has no Religion*. "The religion of Burns lay more in an undercurrent of emotion than in a commanding seat of control. His piety, like all the rest of his noble virtues, so nobly expressed in rhyme, suffered in practice from the weakness of his will. Without a strong will no man can be a complete character, or great in action. No man knew this better than Burns." (Prof. Blackie.)

*like that of Rabelais*. "As for these stories—how he died making an irrelevant pun, how he said he was going to seek a *grand peur-terre*, and so on—we may dismiss them" (Walter Besant).



172. *Politician and Party-man*. John Wilson Croker (1780-1857), called to the bar in 1807, sat in the House of Commons from 1808 to 1832 as Secretary to the Admiralty. Founder of, and constant contributor to, the *Quarterly Review*.

173. *Carteret used as a dactyl*. "Mataire", said Dr. Johnson, "wrote Latin verses from time to time, and published a set in his old age, in which he shows so little learning or taste in writing, as to make Carteret a dactyl. Everybody who knows anything of Latinity knows that, in genealogical tables, Joannes Baro de Carteret, or Vicecomes de Carteret, may be tolerated, but that in compositions which pretend to elegance, Carteret, or some other form which admits of inflection, ought to be used." (Macaulay.)

177. *Hawkins. The Life of Samuel Johnson*: by Sir John Hawkins. London, 1787, 8vo.

*Tyers. A Biographical Sketch of Dr. S. Johnson*: by Thomas Tyers. London, 1785, 8vo.

*Murphy. An Essay on the Life and Genius of S. Johnson*: by Arthur Murphy. London, 1792, 8vo.

*Piozzi. Mrs. H. L. Thrale, afterwards Piozzi: Anecdotes of S. Johnson during the last twenty years of his life*. London, 1786, 8vo.

179. *Taylor made a 'new man*. "So vain of the most childish distinctions that, when he had been to Court, he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword."—"He exhibited himself, at the Stratford Jubilee, to all the crowd which filled Stratford-on-Avon, with a placard round his hat bearing the inscription of 'Corsica Bos-well'" (Macaulay) in allusion to his Travels in Corsica, and his interviews with General Paoli, the Corsican leader there against the French.

180. *Touchwood Auchinleck*. Lord Alexander Bos-well, of Auchinleck in Ayrshire, one of the Judges of the Court of Session. "Touchwood" seems an under-

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allusion to the character of Peregrine Touchwood in Scott's novel of *St. Ronan's Well*, in his "touchy" nature.

181. *hungriest and vainest of all bipeds*. "The lawyers of Edinburgh in those days, with scarcely an exception, being members of the landed aristocracy of the country, and forming by far the most influential body (as indeed they still do), they were, perhaps, as proud a set of men as ever enjoyed the tranquil pleasures of unquestioned superiority. What their *haughtiness* as a body was may be guessed, when we know that inferior birth was reckoned a fair and legitimate ground for excluding any man from the bar." (Lockhart: *Life of Burns*, ch. v.)

*of feudal, genealogical temper*. He quarrelled with his father over the question of entailing the family estate. "I had a zealous partiality for heirs male, however remote, and in the particular case of our family I apprehended that we were under an implied obligation to transmit the estate by the same tenure by which we held it, which was as heirs male, excluding nearer females" (Boswell, who backs up his views by speculations about Melchisedek, &c.).

*"hereditary jurisdictions"*. The Act of 1748, by which the arbitrary rights of landed proprietors to exercise justice upon their estates were abolished, its administration being now confined to professional persons, Sheriffs Depute (as deputed by the Crown) named for each county.

184. *Feast of Tabernacles*. "The peculiar satisfaction which I experienced in celebrating the festival of Easter in St. Paul's Cathedral; that to my fancy it appeared like going up to Jerusalem at the *feast of the Passover*; and that the strong devotion which I felt on that occasion diffused its influence on my mind through the rest of the year" (Boswell).

*blind old woman feeling the cups*. "We went home to his house to tea. Mrs. Williams made it with sufficient dexterity, notwithstanding her blindness, though her manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full



enough, appeared to me a little awkward; for I fancied she put her finger down a certain way, till she felt the tea touch it." (Boswell.)

192. "*Infinitude*". The *Endlichkeit* of the German æsthetic critics. The meaning is that the true writer, by the correct setting and background of his work, conjures up endless vistas for his speculations, showing the Actual running into the Ideal. What is individually true becomes true for all time and all place.

193. *baseless fabric of Prospero*. *Tempest*, iv. 1.

194. *Smollett and Belsham*. T. G. Smollett, novelist and historian (1721-1771); *William Belsham* (died 1827), author of *History of Great Britain, from the Revolution to the Treaty of Amiens*, in 12 vols.

195. *India-bills*. That of Fox in 1783, by which the old irresponsible patronage of the East India Company was to be transferred from the Directors of the Company to a board of seven commissioners, vested in Parliament, elected for five years. Pitt's India Bill of 1784, by which India was made part of the general system of British government.

196. *Mr. Senior*. Nassau William Senior (1790-1864), political economist and jurist. *Michael Thomas Sadler* (1780-1835), author of *Ireland, its Evils and Remedies; Law of Population*—impugning Malthus.

*Bacchus-tamed Lion*. In conformity with the spirit of mythology, where he is represented riding in a golden chariot drawn by tigers and panthers, accompanied by satyrs and centaurs.

"Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by *Bacchus* and his pards."

—Keats: *Ode to a Nightingale*.

197. *Aeneas Sylvius*, known as Pope Pius II (1405-1464), who had been in Scotland under James I, and mentions the use of stone (i.e. coal) for burning. See *Hume Brown's Early Travellers in Scotland*, 1891.

## NOTES

198. *History will be attempted*, &c. "I have preferred to pass over the details of foreign wars and diplomacies, the pomp of courts or the intrigues of favourites, and to dwell at length on the incidents of the constitutional, intellectual, and social advance, in which we read the real history of the nation itself. It is with this purpose that I have devoted more space to Chaucer than to Cressy, to Caxton than to the petty strife of Yorkist and Lancastrian. I have striven throughout that it should never sink into a drum and trumpet history." (J. R. Green: Preface to *Short History*.)

199. "*taking notes*".

"Hear, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots  
Frae Maidenkirke to Johnny Groat,  
If there's a hole in a' your coats,  
I rede ye tent it;  
A chiel's among you *takin' notes*,  
And faith he'll prent it."

—Burns: on Grose the antiquary.

201. *Recording Angel*. "The accusing spirit, which flew up to heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in; and the *recording angel*, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word and blotted it out for ever" (Sterne: *Tristram Shandy*).

*much-enduring*. The Homeric epithet of Ulysses, battling ten years with his troubles after the siege of Troy.

202. *Natus sum*. "I was born: I longed to eat: I sought (for food): now satisfied I rest."

207. *Popinjay*. For the Maypole festivities of shooting at the Popinjay, see Scott's Note A to *Old Mortality*. *Mumbojumbo* is the ogre of the African Guinea Coast.

209. *imprisoned...never rest...waddle*. "He had only the use of one eye. So morbid was his temperament that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he walked, it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters; when he rode, he had no

command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon." (Boswell.)

214. *Pope has seen that Translation.* "The translation of Pope's *Messiah* into Latin verse. "It is said that Mr. Pope expressed himself concerning it in terms of strict approbation" (Boswell).

216. *galloglass*: native Irish soldiery. "The merciless Macdonwald of kerns and galloglasses is supplied" (*Macbeth*, i. 1. 14).

217. *Dr. Parr.* Samuel Parr, the Whig counterpart of Samuel Johnson.

*Cromwell*, &c. The retort of Lord Anichinleck, Boswell's father, to Johnson's defence of Charles I: "Cromwell was a man that forced kings to learn they had a hollow part in their neck for an axe to fall on".

218. *Pactolus*: the river in Lydia, on which Sardis stood, and whose sands were golden from the mines of Mount Tmolus, source of the wealth of Croesus.

*Otway.* Thomas Otway (1651-1685), author of *The Orphan and Venice Preserved*. "He went out, it is reported, almost naked in the rage of hunger, and finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee house, asked him for a shilling. The gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choked with the first mouthful;" (Johnson.)

219. *Scroggins.* In Goldsmith's lines.  
*ebbs when Johnson embarked.* "Johnson came up to London precisely at the time when the condition of a man of letters was most miserable and degraded. It was a dark night between two sunny days. The age of patronage had passed away. The age of general curiosity and intelligence had not arrived." (Macaulay.)

222. *lord of the lion heart, &c.*  
"Thy Spirit, Independence, let me share,  
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye;  
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,  
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky."  
—Smollett: *Ode to Independence.*

## NOTES

223. *Puffery*. See Macaulay's famous castigation of Mr. Robert Montgomery's *Poems*. "Men of letters have accordingly ceased to court individuals, and have begun to court the public. They formerly used flattery. They now use *puffing*."

225. *Osborne*. "It has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that Johnson one day knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop; it was in my own chamber.'" (Boswell.)

227. *idol-cavern*. A reference to the *eidolon* myth of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, according to which men see only shadows, not realities.

228. *Bolingbroke*. Pope's "guide, philosopher, and friend", to whom he was indebted for the philosophy of the *Essay on Man*. John Toland (1670-1722) was one of the writers in the Deist controversy.

229. *Trulliber*, in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.

239. *Senate-of-Lilliput Debates*. Parliament regarded itself as privileged against its debates being reported. In 1738 Cave had by way of caution prefaced the Debates in the *Gentleman's Magazine* by what he called an Appendix to Captain Lemuel Gulliver's Account of the Famous Empire of Lilliput, and Parliament was reported under that name. When Johnson took them in hand, the disguise was still continued.

*impransus all the while*. Without his dinner: in his letter to Cave, in 1738.

*Fourth Estate*. "Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a FOURTH ESTATE more important far than they all" (Carlyle: *The Hero as Man of Letters*).

240. *St. John's Gate*. "He told me, that when he first saw St. John's Gate, the place where *The Gentleman's Magazine* was originally printed, he beheld it with reverence" (Boswell).

241. "One day it shall delight you", &c. Virgil, *Æneid*, i. 203.
242. *Constantine's Banner*. Supposed to have been seen by Constantine in the sky during his march to Rome, and proclaiming victory.
244. *Homer's peasants*. From Pope's *Homer*, Book viii. 687, &c.:
- "The conscious swains, rejoicing in the sight,  
 Blye the blue vault, and bless the useful light."
245. *Thralia*. Mrs. Thrale, of a light, "butterfly" disposition.
246. *ancient slaves...ears bored*. *Exodus*, xxi. 6.
247. *scot-and-lot*: tax paying.
251. *Chalk-Turn Pistolier*. "In 1866 Messrs. Jeffrey and Moore met at *Chalk Farm*. The duel was prevented by the interference of the magistracy; and, on examination, the balls of the pistols, like the courage of the combatants, were found to have evaporated. This incident gave occasion to much wagery in the daily prints." (Byron: *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.)
253. *Peterloo*. The meeting in St. Peter's Field, Manchester, July 16, 1819, on Parliamentary Reform, dispersed by the military.
254. *blind Welshwoman*. Mrs. Williams, as above.
258. *Sterne on Dead Asses*. "At Namport, he gets out of the chaise and whimpers over that famous dead donkey, for which any sentimentalist may cry who will. It is agreeably and skilfully done—that dead jackass—like M. de Soubise's cook on the campaign, Sterne dresses it and serves it up. But tears, and fine feelings, and a white pocket handkerchief, and a funeral sermon, and horses and feathers, and a procession of mules, and a hearse with a dead donkey inside. Pshaw! Mount-bank!" (Thackeray: *English Humourists*.)
259. *Salve magna parens!* "For his native city he ever retained a warm affection, and which, by a sudden apostrophe, under the word *Lich*, he introduces with reverence into his immortal Work, *The English Dictionary*;

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*Salve magna parens*" (Roswell: the reference is to Virgil's address to his native Italy, in *Georgics*, ii. 173).

265. *yeomen whose limbs*. From Henry the Fifth's address to the troops at Harfleur:

"You, good yeomen,  
Whose limbs were made in England, shew us here  
The mettle of your pasture"—iii. 1. 25.

## SCOTT

The Essay appeared in Vol. XXVIII, 1838, of the *Westminster Review*. "He had," says Garnett, "promised Mill to review Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, a task which he accomplished *invidiosâ Minerva*. The essay, nevertheless, is delightfully written, but breaks his master Goethe's first commandment: it is almost wholly negative, and therefore almost wholly barren. Carlyle almost seems to have conceived a grudge against Scott, as he contrasted his instantaneous triumph with the neglect of Burns. He rails at Scott for possessing those business aptitudes the lack of which he deplores in others."

Page 271. *American Cooper*. James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), American novelist; author of *Last of the Mohicans*, *Prairie*, *Pathfinder*, &c.

*China to Peru*.

"Let observation, with extensive view,  
Survey mankind from China to Peru."

—Johnson: *Vanity of Human Wishes*.

*Old Hickory*. General Andrew Jackson, President of the United States (1829-1837), from his reputed toughness as a fighter.

272. *gig or no gig*. Carlyle's favourite gibe at 'gigmanity', the keeping of a gig (as above) indicating respectability.

277. *Thomas Ellwood* (1639-1713), the Quaker friend of Milton, and one of his readers when blind; author of *History of the Life of Thomas Ellwood*, &c.

295. *Cobbett*. William Cobbett (1762-1835), writer of the *Porcupine*, *Weekly Register*, *Cottage Economy*, *Rural Riders*, &c. Saintsbury regards his prose as "the last great representative of the line of Latimer and Bunyan, the perfection of the vernacular made literary".

such limbs do I make. See note to Essay on Johnson.

296. *Beardie of Harden*. He was not of the Harden direct line, but was a Scott of Raeburn. "Beardie, my great-grandfather, derived his cognomen from a venerable beard, which he wore unblemished by razor or scissors, in token of regret for the banished dynasty of Stewart" (Scott: *Autobiography*).

*Redswire*: the skirmish on June 7th, 1575, at one of the meetings held by the Wardens of the Marches, for arrangement of the Borders. The field of battle is a part of the Carter mountains, about ten miles from Jedburgh.

*harried cattle in Tynedale*.

"Bewcastle now must keep the Hold,

Spir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall,

Of Harley-burn the bowman bold

Must only shoot from battled wall;

And Liddesdale may buckle spur,

And Terviot now may belt the brand,

Tarras and Ewes keep nightly stir,

And Eskdale foray Cumberland", &c. &c.

—*Bridal of Triermain*, iii. 1.

"A burst of genuine Borderism", as Lockhart admiringly calls it.

*mute Milton*s.

"Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest."

—Gray: *Elegy*.

299. *La Roche foucault* (1613-1680), the well-known writer of the *Réflexions et Maximes*.

*Episcopalian Dissenter*. Lockhart's remarks on Scott's religion are to be taken with caution. Scott was

an ordained elder of the Church of Scotland in 1806. The paper in *Clarendon Journal*, Jan. 24, 1903, is true only for Scott's wife.

302. *Knox sent the schoolmaster.* In his *First Book of Discipline* he had sketched his plan of National Education, rendered largely ideal by the selfishness of the nobles confiscating Church property.

303. *Debatable Land.* The Debatable Land between the two kingdoms, occupied by the Gracines.

"Was none who struck the hat so well,  
Within the *Land Debatable*.  
Well friended, too, his hardy kin,  
Whoever lost, were sure to win;  
They sought the beeves that made their broth  
In England and in Scotland both."

—Scott: *Lay*, vi. 10.

306. *Dick o' the Cow.* In Scott's *Minstrelsy*, vol. ii, p. 61, where he shows that as early as 1596 the ballad was well known in England.

307. *Some Charlieshope.* The home of Dandie Dinmont, described in *Guy Mannering*, ch. xxiii.

*as Mr. Mitchell says.* A reference to the reminiscence of Scott by his early tutor, the Rev. James Mitchell. "When in church, Master Walter had more of a soporific tendency than the rest of my young charge. He needed one or other of the family to arouse him, and from this it might be inferred that he would cut a poor figure on the Sabbath evening when examined about the sermons. But none of the children, however wakeful, could answer as he did."

308. *Monk Lewis.* Matthew Gregory Lewis, author of *The Monk*, to whose early work, *The Tales of Wonder*, Scott contributed.

317. *Globe Theatre.* If Shakespeare only contemplated money profits from his plays, as Scott did from his novels, what becomes of much of Carlyle's criticism? "Yet they have had results," he admits of the one. Why not admit it of Scott?



317. *thy daemon*, or good angel that watched (according to the belief of classical mythology) over each.

318. *infirmity of noble minds*. The constant misquotation of *Lycidas*, about Fame—"that last infirmity of noble mind".

*Della-Cruscan*: a school of versifiers in the latter half of the eighteenth century, imitating the style of the Florentine Academy of Crusca. They formed the butts of Gifford the satirist, in his *Bavard* and *Mæviad*.

*Hayley*. William Hayley (1745-1820), friend and editor of the poet Cowper.

*Loves of the Plants*. By Erasmus Darwin, in 1789, parodied by George Canning in his *Loves of the Triangles* in the *Anti-Jacobin* (1799-1801).

320. *a criticism on Goethe*. By Carlyle himself, and quoted in the Goethe Essay before.

322. *Chateaubriand*. The great French writer (1769-1848) of the Romantic school; styled "the creator of the primeval forest", from his sentimental Rousseau tone about scenery.

323. *Erwintrhus' curse*, in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*; attributed to Ernulph or Arnulph (1040-1124), French Benedictine and Bishop of Rochester.

*Metrical Chivalry Romances declining*. "A mighty and unexpected rival was advancing on the stage, who after a little velleitation of no great promise, now appeared as a serious candidate in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. I was astonished at the power evinced by that work." (Scott: Pref. to *Rokeby*, 1830.)

325. *Gustaf*. Gustavus Adolphus, or else Gustavus III (1746-1792) or Gustavus IV (1778-1837). *Kaiser Joseph II* (died 1790) was Emperor of Hungary and Bohemia.

327. *Lord Justice-Clerk Braxfield*. Scott attributes this anecdote to Braxfield, but Lord Cockburn believes it true of Henry Home, Lord Kames.

## NOTES

329. *Saint John Street*. The present No. 10.

330. *Aldiborontiphoscophornio*. Scott's name for James Ballantyne from the farce *Chrononhotonthologos* by Henry Carey, 1734.

*Jedediah Cleishbotham*, the imaginary editor of the *Tales of My Landlord* series in the *Waverley Novels*.

331. *Braham*. John Braham (1774-1856), the singer and operatic composer, e.g. of *The Anchor's Weighed*, *Death of Nelson*, *Minute Gun at Sea*, &c.

332. *Peter Mathieson*: Scott's coachman, brother-in-law of Tom Purdie. Died at Abbotsford, 1854, aged 84. "My Automedon for nearly twenty-five years" (Scott, *Journal*, July 15, 1826).

*Maida*. "The noblest and most celebrated of all his dogs, might I not say of all dogs that ever shared the fellowship of man" (Lockhart). He appears as Bevis, the dog in *Woodstock*.

*personage of his Redgauntlet*. Cristal Nixon; Letter iv.

336. *Ferney*. A hamlet near the territory of Geneva. Byron (*Childe Harold*, iii. cv.) writes of Gibbon and Voltaire:

"Lausanne I and Ferney I ye have been the abodes  
Of names which unto you bequeath a name,  
Mortals, who sought and found, by dangerous roads,  
A path to perpetuity of fame."

338. *member of his tail*. The tail was the retinue or following of a Highland chief. "Ah," said he, "if you English gentlemen saw but the chief with his tail on." "With his tail on," echoed Waverley, in some surprise. "Yes—that is, with all his house followers, when he visits those of the same rank." (*Waverley*, ch. xvi.)

339. *Hannah More*. Johnson's blue-stockings friend (1744-1833), author of *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, *Practical Piety*, &c. &c.; *Lady Morgan* (1783-1859), writer of *The Wild Irish Girl* and society novels.

*case in his inn*. *Henry IV*, Part I, iii. 3.

340. *Boccaccio*. Like the portraiture of Florentine life in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

341. *founder of a race*. "His first and last worldly ambition was to be himself the founder of a distinct branch; he desired to plant a lasting root, and dreamt not of personal fame, but of long distant generations rejoicing in the name of 'Scott of Abbotsford'. The lordliest vision of acres would have had little charm for him, unless they were situated on Etrick or Yarrow, or in

'Pleasant Tivendale  
Fast by the river Tweed';" (Lockhart.)

342. *Alexander when he cried*. Butler: *Hudibras*.  
343. *O of Giotto*, the painter of the frescoes of Santa Croce, the architect of the Florentine Duomo and Campanile; died 1336.

344. *Compare Fenella*. "Carlyle could hardly have chosen a less fair comparison. If Goethe is to be judged by his women, let Scott be judged by his men. So judged, I think Scott will, as a painter of character, come out far above Goethe. I doubt if Goethe was ever successful with his pictures of men. *Wilhelm Meister* is, as Niebuhr truly said, 'a menagerie of tame animals'." (Hutton: Scott—Men of Letters Series,—p. 107.)

345. *Minerva Press*: the Leadenhall Street Press, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, issuing fashionable novels.  
*Waverley, carefully written*. Hutton shows the very reverse is the case, as Lockhart has described the famous scene of "The hand at the window", in June, 1814. The last two volumes were written in three weeks.

346. *Not profitable... shapely* Hear Kniskin against this: "Scott's sympathy is universal; there is no rank or condition of men of which he has not shown the loveliest aspect; his code of morals is entirely defined, yet taught with a reserved subtlety like nature's own, so that none but the most earnest readers perceive his intention; and his opinions on all practical subjects are

## NOTES

final; the consummate decisions of accurate and inevitable common sense, tempered by the most graceful kindness."

346. *contrasts of costume*. "You can hardly read any novel of Scott's and not become better aware what public life and political issues mean. And yet there is no artificiality, no elaborate attitudinizing before the antique mirrors of the past, like Bulwer's, no dressing out of clothes-horses like G. P. R. James." (Hutton.)

350. *mob of gentlemen*.

"But for the wits of either Charles' days,  
The mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease,  
Sprat, Carew, Sedley, and a hundred more, &c."  
—Pope: *Imitations of Horace*.

353. *Pierre Bayle* (1647-1706), author of the *Dictionnaire Critique et Historique*.

355. *Matthew Bramble*. The Squire in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*.

*Faust of Mentz*, along with Gutenberg and Schiffer, claims the origin of printing from types; died 1466.

*Cadmus of Thebes*: the legendary inventor of the Greek alphabet.

"You have the letters Cadmus gave—  
Think ye he meant them for a slave."  
—Byron: *The Isles of Greece*.

356. *Constable mountain*. "'I found Constable putting on his nightcap. I staid an hour with him, and I have now the pleasure to tell you that *all is right*. There was not a word of truth in the story—he is as fast as Ben Lomond.' But I confess the impression on my mind was not a pleasant one. It was then I began to harbour a suspicion"—that Scott was a partner in the concern, and would fall with the failure of Constable. (Lockhart.)

357. *The noble war-horse*. *Joh., xxxix.* 19-25.